

T R I B A L



# Leicester City Council Transforming Schools

A report on the Council's  
Draft Proposals for new  
schools in the City

February 2003

# 1 Background

1.1 In pursuit of its objective of continually seeking to raise standards of attainment, Leicester City Council has a well established commitment to the transformation of secondary education. Following a City-wide review completed in 1998, secondary education was re-organised in 1999, with the number of schools being reduced to the current 16.

1.2 Although the first cohort will not complete their GCSEs until 2004, there is strong evidence that standards have already improved. The review also reduced the number of surplus secondary school places and thereby released the associated small schools "subsidy" of some £1.8 million.

1.3 The 2002 GCSE results were the best ever achieved and were a considerable improvement on 2001, a rate of improvement that exceeded the equivalent national rate. However, in a Scrutiny Committee report in September 2002, the director of education described standards as "still too poor and achievement between schools too variable". They are still significantly below the national average. Four secondary schools have results at or below the DfES floor target of 25% 5 or more GCSE grades A\*- C.

1.4 The LEA and City schools have enthusiastically participated in a range of initiatives designed to raise standards. These include Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities, specialist schools, Surestart, Single Regeneration Budget initiatives, and City-wide collaboration on the Leadership Incentive Grant. Despite all these schemes, it has proved very difficult to raise standards in some of the City's most deprived communities. One consequence of the re-organisation is that the communities around the former Mary Linwood and Wycliffe Schools now perceive themselves to have no local secondary school. It is in search of possible solutions to this situation that the City wishes to consider the initiatives described below. It is accepted that these proposals are radical and that there is a need for thorough consultation.

1.5 The City wishes to maintain the momentum the changes described above have brought about. It is now considering three further proposals.

- (i) The establishment of a City Academy for 3- 19 year olds on the site of the former Mary Linwood School in South Leicester.
- (ii) The establishment of a LEA maintained federated school for 3-14 year olds on the former Wycliffe site in West Leicester.
- (iii) Plans put to the City Council by the Leicester Islamic Academy (currently an independent school) to establish the school as a voluntary aided school for 11 – 16 year olds.

1.6 Officers of the City Council have produced various papers that explore these proposals. An associated consultation exercise was undertaken in the

summer of 2002 with the results being considered by the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

1.7 In early February 2003, Tribal Group plc was commissioned by the City Council to produce a report which considered these outline proposals to assess their viability; possible consequences for other schools, and possible consequences on LEA finance. This report considers each proposal in turn and then makes some general observations. As far as possible, the contents of existing documents are not repeated.

1.8 In addition to scrutinising background papers, face to face or telephone conversations were held with the following individuals:

### **Community Representatives**

Les Price	Saffron SRB
Ken Gibbson	Neston Gardens Tenants Association
George Narrowway	Montrose Road Tenants Association
Yvonne Todd	Eyres Monsell Tenants Association
Dorothy Greenhill	Braunstone Community Association

### **Headteachers**

Bill Morris	Fullhurst
Carolyn Robson	Riverside
John Tinning	Lancaster
Jane Collins	Sir Jonathan North
Freda Hussain	Moat
Eddie de Middelaer	Hamilton
Steve Boyce	Queensmead Infants
Carolyn Tesseyman	Queensmead Juniors
Mrs Odedra-Pinder	Southfield Infants
Christine Parkinson	The Newry
Dr Mukadem	Leicester Islamic Academy
Denise Fox	Keyham Lodge

### **Other Stakeholders**

David Nelson	Learning and Skills Council
Peter Taylor	Church of England
Peter Flack et al	Teachers Consultative Committee
Jacky Strong	Leicestershire LEA

## **2 The Proposed Establishment of a City Academy**

2.1 This proposal seeks to use the opportunity presented by the Government's City Academy initiative to improve the quality of education and standards of attainment in one of the most deprived areas in Leicester.

### ***A Radical Solution***

2.2 Whilst the Government is promoting City Academies as part of its proposals for transforming secondary education there is no reason why a proposal cannot address the full 3-18 age range as this does. Indeed, a school that serves the full age range may well be the key to securing higher levels of attainment in key stages 3 and 4. Each City Academy has a curriculum specialism. Early discussions in the Mary Linwood case have favoured a vocational education focus but this has not yet been formally confirmed. Under the City Academy regime, the Government would fund a new, purpose built, school designed to provide excellent facilities in this or another specialist area. In addition, the school will be expected to innovate with teaching and learning styles which will be supported by easy access to cutting edge ICT equipment. All Academy's must be fully inclusive, offering a curriculum designed to meet the needs of all pupils in their designated area.

2.3 The Government place a high value on providing innovative solutions to patterns of attainment which appear difficult to change. The age range and cohort size proposals are innovative. Indeed, in the context of City Academies, they are unique. Nationally there is a well evidenced risk of pupils' attainments dipping as they transfer from primary to secondary school. This proposal has the potential to address this issue although there is very little evidence from elsewhere to draw on.

2.4 Similarly, the small secondary school cohort could offer innovative possibilities in relation to curriculum organization, teaching and learning styles, links to parents, carers and the community, and the provision of focused "wrap-around" support to individual pupils. Teachers would be able to develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of the attainment, progress, learning and wider needs of every pupil. As a new school, it could appoint secondary phase staff wholly committed to, and equipped for, such an innovative approach. It would also potentially provide a solution that is carefully tailored to a group of children whose families and communities would be intimately known by the adults employed at the school. It could therefore be a highly context specific solution. Other possible education benefits are described in the City's background papers.

2.5 The Government is also committed to promoting diverse provision in the secondary sector. A City Academy would add to this diversity, especially for

parents in the local community, who see themselves as having very limited choice at present. The small size of the year groups could be presented as at the heart of the Academy's innovative approach. This would anticipate criticism by making the small cohort a key feature rather than an inherent weakness. A small school would, in itself, add to the diversity of secondary schools in the City.

2.6 High quality post 16 provision may attract young people to continue in education in an area where current participation rates are said to be low, although no supporting evidence has been provided. However, the proposed sixth form is relatively small. The current City school organisation plans clearly states that current post 16 provision is adequate in terms of numbers and geography with sufficient capacity within existing providers to meet any likely expansion.

2.7 The proposal acknowledges the need for co-operation with other post-16 providers and the City Council and local Learning and Skills Council would encourage this. Given the small size of the proposed cohort it will be necessary to maintain good links or managed joint provision with other providers to ensure curriculum breadth and depth. The culture of collaboration that already exists in the City gives confidence that such links will be developed. With these links in place, the Academy could focus on being a niche provider of learning opportunities that are carefully and flexibly tailored to local needs. The existence of such links will be necessary if the DfES and Learning and Skills Council is to support this proposal.

***Match of the current proposal to DfES criteria for supporting City Academy submissions.***

2.8 In some ways, this proposal fits well with existing DfES requirements.

- It is in an area of disadvantage
- It would form a key part of the overall regeneration of the neighbourhood in which it would be located
- The LEA would be supportive of developing good links with other providers in the area
- The proposal envisages a fully inclusive school that would serve the local community
- There are potential credible sponsors who have expressed interest in supporting the proposed Academy.

2.9 However, in very significant ways, the proposal does not match DfES requirements. The Government expects City Academies to either replace one or more existing schools or to be established in an area where there is an additional basic need for school places.



2.10 Whilst the proposed Academy would replace the existing Southfield Infant and Newry Junior schools, the plan does not envisage the replacement of any existing secondary school. This aspect of the DfES criteria is therefore only partly met.

2.11 The City Council's School Organisation Plan for 2002 – 2007 declares there to be "no basic need for additional school places" (para 4.17 page 61) and that "the number and distribution of sixth form places meets current and future requirements" (para 4.4 page 49). The proposal envisages that the Academy will reverse the flow of Leicester pupils to Leicestershire schools (currently there are some 2332 City pupils in Leicestershire schools or 360 – 422 per year group) although this is not supported by any substantial evidence from parents and young people. Using current data, the City would be unable to show that there is an additional basic need and the proposal therefore would not meet this element of the DfES's criteria.

2.12 It should be noted that the DfES have recently changed the basis for calculating the sufficiency of school places by moving from the established MOE (more open enrolment) approach to the concept of net capacity. The current school organisation plan is based on the former. It may be the case that, when the new methodology is applied, a basic need case can be supported. This work is currently being undertaken. Alternatively, if the Academy did not reverse the flow of South Leicester pupils out of the City, the opening of the Academy could add to the number of surplus places. On the other hand, the majority of surplus places are at New College, a site which is not easily accessible from the area around Mary Linwood. Other schools in the South and East are more or less full and a case for additional places could be made on a sub-area basis.

2.13 The City's current school organisation plan implies a minimum secondary school size of six forms of entry. The Academy proposal is for three. The current proposal does not provide a convincing case for how a broad and balanced curriculum can be provided so that the needs of all pupils can be met. If the proposals remain as they stand, it is likely that the DfES will see this as a major issue. They will need considerable comfort that this is a viable cohort size. Of course, Academies are encouraged to be innovative. It will be necessary to give more thought to the design of the curriculum offer to demonstrate how an innovative approach can address these concerns.

2.14 It would be possible to propose a larger secondary cohort. This would be more acceptable within the parameters of current orthodoxy on the desirable size of a secondary school in relation to its curriculum offer. Such a size would help mitigate the need for more detailed proposals on the innovative curriculum design that will be required to meet the needs of a smaller cohort. In the short term at least it will increase the number of surplus places and is likely to strengthen opposition from the provider interest groups and magnify the impact on other schools..

2.15 The Government has a wider educational agenda that seeks to promote local solutions matched to local need, innovation and diversity of provision. Given that the Academy proposal does not wholly match DfES City Academy specific criteria it will be necessary to emphasise the match between this wider agenda and the relevant aspects of this proposal. Indeed, it could be argued that existing City Academy criteria mitigate against the Government's wider objectives and that the Mary Linwood proposal should be supported precisely because it does not easily fit the prevailing expectations.

### ***Staffing Issues***

2.16 The Academy is likely to have to recruit its secondary phase staff from scratch. The innovative approach to teaching and learning that will be required, the schools small size, and likely opposition from teacher unions, may combine to make recruitment of staff with the required experience and skills difficult. The success of the school will be entirely dependent on its ability to attract the best possible teachers. This may prove more difficult to achieve than is currently anticipated, especially in light of the opposition to the proposal from the professional associations representing teachers.

2.17 The professional organizations representing teachers in the City are, in principle, totally opposed to this proposal. This reflects their national position although their case also includes reference to local factors. In relation to the former, teachers are concerned about:

- Possible changes to teachers conditions of service and possible loss of union rights and influence
- The impact on the LEA's central services
- The independent status of the school and its possible lack of accountability to all stakeholders
- The role of external sponsors and their influence on the educational provision in the school
- A possible negative impact on relationships within the LEA.

2.18 In relation to the local context, teachers are concerned about:

- A possible negative impact on other schools, including the potential for job losses
- How staff will be recruited to the Academy, especially the position of staff in Southfields/Newry
- The ability of an Academy of this size to offer a viable curriculum in key stages 3-5.
- The prospect of further disruption following the recent secondary reorganization which is still incomplete and has reportedly resulted in a lowering of morale

- The lack of an overall rationale for this proposal, especially in relation to any explicit knock on benefits to other schools. The unions could not see what these might be.
- The need for an overall strategy for education in the City as a precursor to this proposal. Teachers believe this proposal must be part of a wider plan that addresses how standards can be raised in all schools. This would also address behaviour management, recruitment and retention, the needs of schools facing challenging circumstances, and LEA support services
- The possible re-introduction of the small school subsidy to support the Academy (and possibly other schools that get smaller as a result of the Academy opening) and the negative impact this would have on the overall schools budget
- The opportunity costs of the work involved with establishing the Academy on the LEA's ability to address the needs of other schools
- Their belief that the Academy will have no impact on reversing pupils migration to Leicestershire schools
- A lack of consultation and information about the proposals.

2.19 They have set out their concerns in great detail and made their views widely known. Whilst the "in-principle" concerns are more difficult to respond to, many of the above issues could be discussed and potentially addressed through discussions at the next stage, especially when the main sponsor has been identified.

***Contribution to the Council's strategy for Neighbourhood Revitalisation.***

2.20 The location of the proposed City Academy in South Leicester will bring a wide range of potential benefits to the residents of Saffron, Eyres Monsell, and adjacent wards. These wards experience high levels of deprivation. The lack of a local secondary school and perceived barriers to travel to other Leicester secondary schools, contributes to a pattern that results in many pupils being educated outside their community in Leicestershire schools. If the Academy were to gain the confidence of the local community it would contribute to social cohesion, reduce the need for travel to school, provide employment and provide educational opportunities for adults. It is envisaged that the school design would incorporate facilities for the full range of services to children, young people and families.

2.21 The state of the art building would enable the replacement of the two nearest primary schools with the new school symbolising a strong, highly visible, commitment to the local community and to a better future. It would place a strong and confident school and lifelong learning centre at the very heart of a deprived community.



## ***Financial Issues***

2.22 City Academy's are wholly funded by Government and private sponsorship. Funding has three elements:

- Development and implementation grants
- Capital grants for the building works
- Continuing revenue costs.

At present, the City Council does not have access to the capital resources that would be necessary to fund building works of this scale or, indeed, to even replace the two nearby primary schools. The communities served by the Academy would therefore benefit from state of the art facilities at no capital cost to the City Council. Similarly, the development grant would enable the recruitment of additional staff, so ensuring that existing staff were able to maintain their focus on the wider needs of the education service.

2.23 The Academy would have the potential to reduce the flow of Leicester resident pupils to Leicestershire schools. The Council will need to model the financial implications of any such trend to ascertain the impact such an outcome will have on the Council's overall budget.

2.24 The consultation responses included a concern that the Council's resources would be distracted by this initiative and that an opportunity cost would be felt in other aspects of the work of the education service. Any innovative service will be, and should be, continually exploring strategic options. The current commitment of officer time is entirely consistent with that of an innovative, strategic thinking LEA. If the project were to proceed, the detailed implementation work would be funded and managed by the DfES.

2.25 Whilst City Academies are entirely funded by Government and sponsors, there is a financial implication for the Council. Academies are entirely independent of the Council and receive their funding directly from DfES. One element of this funding is the Academy's "share" of central LEA expenditure. This resource will therefore be transferred from the RSG to the Academy's governing body by a mechanism similar to that which operated with grant maintained schools. The Council would need to clarify the scale of this transfer and take the necessary steps to balance its own budget. (In another LEA of slightly smaller size the sum lost was £50,000 for a rather larger school). The Council would be protected from this effect in the financial year the school opens (assuming a September start). There would also be a pro-rata reduction in Standards Fund allocations to the City. Of course, it would be open to the Academy to buy back an equivalent value of services from the City. When a sponsor is publicly identified they could be asked to state their position on this issue.

2.26 The present Mary Linwood site offers a potential capital receipt which, depending on planning policy could be significant and support capital investment in schools elsewhere. Of course, to offset this there would be a potential capital gain from the Southfield/Newry sites plus the benefit of a very significant capital investment by DfES.

2.27 It is likely that the LSC will be responsible for agreeing to the establishment of new post 16 provision and for funding it. The local LSC currently has insufficient information about the proposal to have a view on whether it will support this element of the Academy. If a good case is made – which must be assumed – then such support is likely to be forthcoming. The local LSC is in the process of clarifying the precise funding arrangements should the Academy go ahead with or without LSC support.

### ***Community Perspectives***

2.28 Discussions were held with representatives of community groups in the Saffron, Eyres Monsell and Montrose Road areas, the communities that are likely to be those from which the school would draw its pupils. All representatives believed the proposed Academy would potentially bring real benefits to the area if it were to be a truly local school. A state of the art building would bring renewed confidence and pride to the area. There was a ready acceptance that educational attainment within the community was too low. They would hope to see a school characterised by strong leadership, good teaching, firm discipline, a school uniform and a strong parental voice.

2.29 There was a strong feeling that current arrangements do not serve local needs and that the Academy would bring stability and continuity to the education of local young people. Parents felt let down by the previous LEA regime which let Mary Linwood decline and the current arrangements for secondary education which they believe present them with little real choice of secondary school. All groups believe that the City Council does not listen to them. Sending children to Leicestershire schools was seen as the most sensible and accessible option (eg private buses run from the Eyres Monsell area to Leicestershire schools).

2.30 All groups were supportive of the Southfield/Newry merger as they see the sense of all through primary provision. It was claimed that parents will want considerable assurances about the proposed age range to be served by the Academy, especially in relation to the safety of the younger pupils. Reassurances were also sought in relation to:

- The role of business
- The composition of the governing body
- The identity of the sponsors
- The full involvement of the community at the design stage as well as when the school is up and running

- The admissions criteria
- The likelihood of any academic selection

If these issues were to be thoroughly discussed at the earliest possible stage, it is likely that the community would enthusiastically and actively support the establishment of the Academy.

2.31 The Council have commissioned a survey of parental views on these proposals although the results were not available at the time this report was written.

2.32 The initial consultation exercise conducted by the City did not reveal a strong body of opinion in favour of the proposed Academy. Many of the critical voices came from what might be described as the “provider interest”. These voices included those against Academies “on principle”, those fearing a negative impact on other Leicester schools, and teachers who feared a negative impact on jobs and conditions of service. This mirrors experience elsewhere.

### ***Possible impact on other schools***

2.33 The impact on other schools is difficult to demonstrate, both in areas where other City Academies operate and in this case. Only three City Academies are operating at present. Each opened in September 2002 and has replaced an existing school or schools, inheriting its pupil population from its predecessors. Locally, the City has surplus secondary places (but not in the ex Mary Linwood area) with secondary school rolls projected to fall by a further 130-140 per year group by 2007. The opening of any new provision is likely to increase pressure on the viability of other schools.

2.34 Other schools can be affected by:

- Possible threats to their overall viability
- Falling rolls reducing budget share
- Possible loss of tiered DfES grants as number of pupils decreases
- The possible re-introduction of the small schools subsidy with the knock-n effect on non-subsidised schools
- Loss of higher attaining pupils if the Academy selects 10% of its intake.

2.35 The Academy will be a new school. If it follows the City model it will have a priority admissions area. This will inevitably encroach on the catchment area of another secondary school or schools. These areas have not been formally altered since the closure of Mary Linwood School but given the anticipated popularity of the school it is likely that there will be a need for such an area. Given the intention that the school serves the local area, the natural boundaries of the City, the Canal and the railway line describe the likely catchment to the

south, west and east respectively. The northern boundary is less clear at this stage.

### **Primary Schools**

2.36 At the primary stage, the Academy will draw most of its pupils from the area currently served by **Southfields/Newry**. The communities currently served by these schools would therefore almost certainly all obtain a place at the Academy. The PAN for these schools is 60, the same as the PAN for the primary phase of the Academy. The current year group cohorts at these schools varies from 33 – 45. If the Academy admits up its PAN then the additional pupils will be drawn from either Leicestershire schools or nearby City schools.

2.37 City figures show between 12 – 22 pupils per year group from the Southfields/Newry area in Leicestershire schools. This indicates that, even if all of this number of Southfields/Newry pupils are attracted to the Academy there may still be a small knock-on impact on the rolls of nearby primary schools, of which **Eyres Monsell** is the nearest, although **Rolleston Juniors, Montrose and Marriott** are also nearby. All of these, except Montrose, have a significant number of surplus places at present. (See also the “year 5” issues described in paragraphs 2.42 – 2.43 below).

2.38 The Academy proposal appears to be holding up the amalgamation of Southfields and Newry. Both school communities are in favour of amalgamation and want it to proceed. The current uncertainty about the Academy is having an adverse impact on the ability of these two schools to plan strategically, on recruitment and retention and on parental confidence. This is causing frustration to all concerned.

### **Secondary Schools**

2.39 In terms of secondary education, the LEA’s own figures show that children within the ex Mary Linwood catchment area attend the following schools

<b>School</b>	<b>Approx Number of Pupils in Years 7 - 11</b>
Leicestershire schools total	540 (100 - 120 per year group)
Riverside	135 (20 - 25 per year group)
Lancaster	212 (40 - 60 per year group)
Sir Jonathan North	175 (22 - 52 per year group)
New College	11 (2 per year group)
English Martyrs	48 (7 - 12 per year group)

2.40 It would be reasonable to assume that parents are choosing **English Martyrs** because of its denominational status and these choices are unlikely to be affected by the opening of the Academy.

2.41 In many ways, the **Leicestershire schools** are more accessible to pupils in the ex Mary Linwood area than the City school alternatives. Well established public transport and private contractor routes exist and sibling connections are in place. These are the pupils who the Academy will need to attract if it is to achieve the notion of a school that enjoys the confidence and support of the local community.

Such support is more likely to be obtained if the community is fully engaged with this initiative from the earliest possible stage.

2.42 Virtually no pupils transfer from Newry Junior School to Leicestershire schools as parents in this particular community appear to make the Leicestershire school choice when their children enter reception. In the communities served by Rolleston Junior and Eyres Monsell Schools this pattern also exists but is supplemented by additional transfers at the end of year 5 when parents seek places on the Leicestershire schools catering for 10-14 year olds. This year 5 transfer presents significant organisational problems for these two schools.

2.43 Assuming the Year 5 in the City Academy is always full, if this Year 5 transfer to Leicestershire schools is to be reversed it will obviously require parents to keep their children at Rolleston/Eyres Monsell for an additional year as they will only be able to access an Academy place in Year 7. This will require a considerable degree of confidence in both being able to get an Academy place and in the quality of provision at the Academy as parents will potentially be sacrificing a place in a Leicestershire middle school. This indicates a need to target these parents and to provide as many assurances as possible to secure their confidence.

2.44 The County Council has some concerns about the potential impact of the Academy on **Wigston School** as it is planning to rebuild the school and does not wish to construct a new school that may soon have surplus places. Their current view is that a three form entry secondary phase at the Academy would have minimal impact on these plans but, if the Academy's secondary cohort were to be larger, their concern would grow accordingly. They would like to be kept fully informed of the evolving plans.

2.45 **Riverside School** was the designated co-educational school for ex Mary Linwood pupils although the community see it as relatively inaccessible when compared to Leicestershire schools. Parents are also concerned about a general sense of instability magnified by frequent changes of headteacher, and have a perception that the school does not provide a disciplined learning environment. Some 14% (108) of Riverside's pupils come from the ex Mary Linwood catchment area.

2.46 If Riverside were to lose this number of pupils (some 20-25 per year) then it is likely that it would be able to make up the equivalent number from further a field. At present, the school is increasingly attracting pupils from the Braunstone area whose parents are not prepared to accept a place at **New College** and/or cannot get a place at **Fullhurst**. Last year 18 parents indicated a first choice preference for Riverside but failed to obtain a place. Consultation feedback also revealed some dissatisfaction with provision at **New College** where there are already over 400 surplus places. This suggests that the most significant knock-on impact of the Academy might well be felt at New College, a school some distance away, where it may compound the current challenges facing this school.

2.47 Riverside is a school facing challenging circumstances. If the roll were to fall as a result of the Academy opening then the opportunity will arise for the City to consider a conscious decision to make the school smaller so that it might better meet the needs of its pupils. Such a move would ideally be part of a City wide strategy although other headteachers are likely to be concerned about the re-introduction of any associated small school subsidy payments.

2.48 **Sir Jonathan North** is a popular, oversubscribed, girls school that has seen standards increase considerably in recent years. Although it is relatively close to the former Mary Linwood site, the closure of that school did not materially impact on the overall make-up of the school's intake, some 50% of whom come from outside the priority admissions area. As the only non-denomination girls school in the City this pattern is likely to remain. The school is presently oversubscribed but the level of oversubscription is decreasing. The advent of a nearby City Academy would be a further reason for the school to reconsider its mission, a possible positive development in terms of the diversity of secondary schooling within the City. Overall, the Academy is likely to have a minimal impact on this school.

2.49 **Lancaster** is a popular and oversubscribed boys school. Although some 15% of its pupils come from the Mary Linwood area, the current extent of oversubscription would enable it to remain full. However, the school believes that the number of pupils from the Mary Linwood area is unlikely to drop significantly as they are making a conscious choice for single sex education in a well established school.

### ***Headteacher Perspectives***

2.50 In general, the headteachers interviewed were supportive of these proposals although all agreed there had been insufficient information and consultation and that there was a need to put this proposal into the context of a wider strategy for the development of education in the City. Whilst they were supportive of the externally funded investment in the Mary Linwood area ("a splendid idea"), they were not clear about the detailed rationale and regretted this. There was widespread concern about the possible re-introduction of a small



secondary school subsidy – either as a result of the Academy itself or of the knock-on effects on other schools. The unique position of the Academy could be addressed through the usual formula funding review process.

2.51 Headteachers are particularly attracted by the idea of a well resourced school with all children and family services on site, with extended hours educational provision, and with the proposed size and wide age range.

2.52 This a bold and imaginative proposal that is high risk but which has the potential to creatively respond to local community needs that are palpably not being met at present. It will be important to continually assert that this innovative approach is being considered as a means of further raising standards in a community where existing standards are a cause of real and widespread concern.

### 3 A Federated School on the Wycliffe Site

3.1 The Council wish to explore several options for the development of school provision on the site of the former Wycliffe School. The options presented are as follows.

- (i) A 3-16 school
- (ii) A federated school or a single school for the 3-14 age range
- (ii) A 11-16 school
- (iv) A 3-11 primary school

3.2 The general objective underlying these proposals is to provide high quality school provision for the Braunstone community. This would consist of rebuilding existing primary schools and, possibly, providing secondary provision in an area where the local community perceive, as a result of the recent secondary re-organisation, there is none.

3.3 The community regard the closure of Wycliffe School and the subsequent arrangements made by the Council for secondary education to be highly controversial. In particular, there is little confidence in **New College** with local parents expressing a strong preference for **Fullhurst School** and, if no places are available there, **Riverside School**. A new school would thereby contribute to wider social regeneration initiatives in this relatively deprived community. The local community association appear to share this view which results in some hostility to using locally available regeneration resources to assist the development of a new school. The Board of the local regeneration scheme is due to change substantially in March and this position may therefore change.

3.4 There is also a wish to bring local pupils back into local schools from schools in Leicestershire. The numbers leaving the wider area are considerable – 321 from the New College priority admissions area and 374 from the equivalent Riverside area, ie some 140 per year group. However, there is no firm evidence that new secondary provision at Wycliffe would have a material impact on this pattern as the parents on the adjacent Braunstone Estate appear to have confidence in Fullhurst School.

3.5 All stakeholders had very little information about the proposals for the Wycliffe site or the overall rationale. All did agree that educational attainment in the Braunstone area was a cause of concern, that further improvements were necessary, and that more thorough consultation about solutions was desirable.

#### **(i) A 3-16 school**

3.6 The 3-16 proposal has been discounted as a preliminary assessment indicates that the current available site would not be of sufficient size for such a

school. Neither is it clear that, even if it was, the Council has access to the necessary capital resources that would be required to build such a school.

**(ii) A 3-14 school**

3.7 Council documentation describes the advantages of such a school to be:

- Curriculum continuity across a wider age range with more coherent development of cross curricular skills,
- More coherent assessment across full age range with staff better able to monitor pupils personal development,
- More consistent teaching styles across the full age range will reduce the fall back in attainment that is often seen as pupils transfer from primary to secondary school,
- Pupils have more opportunities to work outside their age group,
- A new school would present an opportunity to co-locate the full range of services to children, young people and families on the same site and in purpose build accommodation,
- Pupils would have easy access to the planned leisure facilities planned for the same site,
- It would place a new school at the heart of the Braunstone community.

All of these points offer real potential benefits. The advantages of a wide age group, small cohort school are rehearsed in paragraphs 2.2 – 2.5. On the other hand, the teachers professional associations believe a 3-14 school would be unviable in terms of its ability to offer a comprehensive curriculum at key stage 3.

3.8 The greatest potential impact of this proposal would be in the secondary sector. The existing schools that serve the greatest number of secondary age pupils from the former Wycliffe area are Fullhurst (83 in current year 7), New College (31 in current year 7), and Riverside (19 in current year 7). Of these schools, there is a significant number (439) of surplus places at New College. As described in paragraph 2.33 above, it is projected that surplus secondary school places will increase by a further 130-140 per year group by 2007. Given the current popularity and proximity of Fullhurst, any new secondary provision at Wycliffe is most likely to impact, in numerical terms, on New College. Since the closure of Wycliffe, Fullhurst has increasingly become a white working class school. New secondary age provision at Wycliffe would partly reverse this trend.

3.9 It is difficult to see how the Council could justify using its own capital resources to fund the secondary phase of this proposal in light of the high number of surplus places in the relatively nearby New College and the wider capital improvement needs of the City's schools. In the earlier consideration of the proposed City Academy, the new school would attract capital resources not otherwise available to the City and such opportunity costs to other schools would be mitigated.

3.10 Also, given the rolls of the schools favoured by the Braunstone community, the only available option for the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 would be to transfer to New College, a school that has not succeeded in gaining the confidence of most parents on the Estate. There will also be risks to smooth pupil progress from year 9 to year 10 similar to those at primary to secondary transfer. There may also be significant social issues relating to the bringing together of two previously separate and traditionally hostile – in terms of both educational experience and place of residence - cohorts of pupils of that age.

3.11 Parents keeping their pupils at the new school from year 6 to year 7 would postpone their right to express a secondary school preference until year 9. As parents elsewhere in Leicester would be expressing a preference in year 6 the options available at Year 9 would be considerably reduced as many other schools would be fully subscribed. Again, this could well result in New College being the only option for parents who would have a wider range of options available if their child transferred to secondary school at the normal age. If the new 3 – 14 school was federated with New College, parents would effectively be accepting a key stage 4 place at New College at the point they accepted a place for their child to enter the federated school.

3.12 Although it has not been formally proposed, another option would be to federate a new 3-14 school at Wycliffe with Fullhurst School. The local advantages of such a proposal would be that the school does have the confidence of the local community, has well developed links with several primary schools serving the local area, and is easily accessible from the Braunstone Estate.

3.13 However, there is a need for capital investment at Fullhurst to bring the existing accommodation up to an appropriate standard and the school is currently full. Any additional key stage 4 places would therefore require even further capital investment. However, if capital resources are available, a federated school based on the Fullhurst site (with no secondary provision on the Wycliffe site), with extended secondary provision and including reorganised primary provision across the area, would achieve many of the educational objectives whilst also enjoying community support.

3.14 All of the above issues relate primarily to the proposed key stage 3 provision. It is difficult to see a convincing case for including new secondary school provision on the Wycliffe site, especially if it is federated with New College. The issue of new primary provision is considered from paragraph 3.18 below.

### **(iii) A 11-16 School**

3.15 This proposal offers none of the curriculum continuity benefits of the previous two proposals. Its merits lie largely in providing secondary provision in a community who perceive there to be none and in possible advantages of establishing a new purpose built school as described in paragraph 2.4 above. However, Fullhurst School is within safe and easy walking distance and has gained the confidence of the local community.

3.16 The Council has only recently made the decision to close Wycliffe School to align the supply and demand of secondary school places across the City. There is little evidence of parental demand for secondary provision on the Wycliffe site or that such provision would discourage travel to schools outside the City. A large number, set to grow, of surplus places already exists and a new school would compound this situation. A small school would benefit from the small school subsidy and so divert resources from other schools. The reopening of a secondary school in these circumstances would bring criticism of the LEA's approach to strategic planning from other headteachers. If only considering secondary provision, it would probably make more sense to extend Fullhurst.

3.17 If this proposal were to proceed, the opportunity to provide enhanced primary school provision in the community would be lost as the site could not accommodate the full age range. From the point of view of the Learning and Skills Council, the development of a coherent 14-19 curriculum for all young people in the area might be constrained by a new 11-16 school.

### **(iv) A 3 – 11 School**

3.18 The parents and governors of *Queensmead Infant and Junior Schools* have expressed a wish to amalgamate their schools. This aspiration provides a basis for developing new provision on the Wycliffe site. However, the City has recently (January 2003) indicated that no capital funds are available to support the necessary capital works. Should a new primary school be built on the Wycliffe site, there will be a potential capital receipt from the existing junior school site which could contribute to a new build project.

3.19 Both Queensmead schools believe themselves to be in limbo and face imminent serious financial challenges as well as, in the case of the Junior School, the urgent need to respond to their recent designation as requiring special measures. The uncertain future of these schools is adversely impacting on strategic planning and the recruitment and retention of staff.

3.20 The current Wycliffe proposals envisage a primary school with planned admissions number of 45 pupils per year. This is designed to fit the roll projections of the two Queensmead schools and would effectively be a like for like replacement in terms of provision. A consequence of this would be little

change, if any, to the priority admissions area of the existing schools and therefore a minimal impact on other primary schools.

3.21 The City's school organisation plan does not make an explicit statement about preferred primary school size. Current professional orthodoxy suggests admissions number would ideally be in units of 30 as school funding and design emphasises one teacher per class of 30. Clearly, there are other ways of organising teaching and learning and a new school always offers additional opportunities for innovation. It will be important to ensure that any new built is fit for purpose and supportive of new ways of working so that a relatively unusual admissions number is used to good advantage rather than as a source of organisational and parental frustration. Given that any new school would be staffed by those currently employed at the existing schools, it would be important that everyone is signed up to the vision for the new school and professionally equipped to realise its potential.

3.22 The building of a new school provides the opportunity to design-in the co-location of the full range of services for children and their parents carers to provide a "full-service" school providing co-ordinated services available in a single place. The funding of these aspects of provision could potentially be supported by regeneration resources. Such services could include early years provision, family education, adult education, social services, and health services as well as access to the leisure facilities due to be built on the site. The proposals suggest full time foundation stage provision for 25 full time equivalent places. It would be important to ensure that all local parents who wish for such provision have access to it. This has implications for the number of hours of provision per pupil. There is some indication that parents have safety concerns about a co-location with the new leisure centre. This concern would need to be addressed and could be through the design and orientation of the new school. The potential exists for this to be real centre of excellence at the heart of the community.

3.23 If a primary provision only option for the Wycliffe site was pursued then the site could accommodate a larger school and thereby offer improved facilities to a greater number of children and families. Primary school roll figures indicate a need to review the overall pattern of primary school provision on the Braunstone Estate including the opportunity to consider the relocation of current provision at **Bendbow Rise Infants** and **Crescent Juniors** on the Wycliffe site. There would be no additional site purchase costs and the potential for two further capital receipts relating to the existing premises. Obviously, new build costs would increase but by less than double that of the Queensmead only option. Parents served by the existing Bendbow Rise/Crescent schools may perceive the new provision to be too far from their homes. This is an issue that would need to be further explored as part of a full consultation exercise.

3.24 The larger school option could have a planned admissions number of 90. This would give it a substantial budget that would present the headteacher and



governors with a wider range of options in terms of how to make best use of available resources. It would still be possible, if desired, to federate the new school with Fullhurst to provide a framework of governance and management within which to address progression and continuity issues from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

3.25 The impact of such a new primary school on other primary schools is likely to be minimal. Whichever option were adopted there would be no need to change the priority admissions area and therefore no numerical loss of potential pupils to other schools. Similarly, there would be no revenue funding implications for other schools. Indeed, the removal of small school subsidy would mean that marginally more resources would be available to all other schools. However, other schools would potentially suffer from having less access to available capital improvement resources if a significant investment from mainstream sources was made on the Wycliffe site.

## **4 Voluntary Aided Status for the Leicester Islamic Academy**

4.1 The Leicester Islamic Academy is currently a fee paying co-educational independent school offering education for 11 to 16 year olds. The current roll ranges from 78 pupils in year 7 to 39 in year 10. It is anticipated that all 104 year 7 places will be taken in September 2003. The majority of pupils are girls with some 75% coming from addresses within the City boundary. Boys have only been admitted since September 2002. The school is seeking voluntary aided status for a four form entry (104 pupils) 11 – 16 school for boys and girls. It will be for the Leicester School Organisation Committee (SOC) to approve the establishment of the school. In practical terms, this will be difficult without LEA support.

4.2 The school has a strong academic record with very good value added from key stages 3 to 4. At present, the school does a pre-entry academic screening assessment as it is unable to offer any specialist support to pupils with special educational needs. It accepts that this will need to change with voluntary aided status. There are obvious implications for staff at the school. The school has indicated it would play a full part in the work of the wider family of schools in Leicester.

4.3 The school also has a primary phase which is not included in this proposal. For the secondary school to be established it would be necessary to move to another site. The school has identified a suitable location at the old Dunlop factory on Evington Valley Road close to the main Muslim community. Architects have been engaged to produce preliminary plans which show a purpose built school with off-site playing fields at an unspecified location.

4.4 As part of its objective of promoting diversity in the secondary sector, the Government have indicated they are favourably disposed to an increase in the number of faith schools. Given the large Muslim population in Leicester, the current number of applications for places and experience elsewhere, it is likely that the school will be easily able to attract its target intake figure.

### ***Resource Implications***

4.5 For the SOC to properly evaluate the establishment of the school, they will want to consider the capital and revenue implications. In respect of capital, the DfES would consider any proposals on an “in principle,” conditional basis to allow the SOC to come to an informed view. Initial contacts made by the Academy were reported to have been met with a favourable response. It would be for the LEA to submit a capital bid as part of the annual VA school capital bidding round (next round due in September 2003). The LEA is required to put forward up to three bids and to place these in rank order. There will be other potential VA

capital bid priorities and the placing of the Islamic Academy in the priority list will obviously mean another scheme cannot be prioritised.

4.6 If successful, the DfES would provide up to 90% of the agreed resource, with the foundation being expected to fund the remaining 10%. They have indicated this contribution has already been identified. The LEA would therefore not have to contribute any of its own capital resources. In providing its conditional view of the suitability of the proposed capital works, the DfES will take into account the extent to which the final buildings meet the Government's expected standards for secondary education for the foreseeable future. For example, it is unlikely they would look favourably on the conversion of an existing Victorian primary school. The outline architect's plans show a purpose built school on a new site. Within the overall public sector requirement of value for money, there is no limit on the amount that can be bid for.

4.7 In terms of revenue, and assuming a 1<sup>st</sup> September opening date, there are several possibilities in year one.

(i) The DfES agree to record the pupils on roll in the current independent school in the LEA's spring PLASC return so that the City's RSG can be adjusted to cover the revenue costs for the 7 months from the following September to March. This would need to be formally agreed with DfES. There would be no net cost to the LEA.

(ii) The LEA fund the school from September to March with no RSG support during that period. This would cost the LEA a sum that could be calculated from its school funding formula based on pupil numbers in particular age groups. If the LEA made no one-off special provision for this, the equivalent sum would be effectively top sliced from the budgets of other schools.

(iii) The current school covers its own costs for the September to March period with no costs being met by the LEA.

4.8 In subsequent years, funding for pupils at the school would flow through the RSG. There would be an associated marginal implication for the Council Tax. The most significant cost implication for other schools is that, under the current LEA funding formula, the VA academy would attract a small school subsidy, thereby reducing the overall pot available to other schools. The current proposal is for a cohort of 104 based on four classes of 26. This is likely to prove problematic for the school in financial terms and may well need to be reconsidered.

4.9 The LEA School Organisation Plan indicates there are surplus places within the secondary sector in the City and that the number of these is set to increase. In arithmetic terms, this proposal will add to the overall number of

surplus places although there are very few in the schools most likely to be affected.

### ***Possible Impact on Other Schools***

4.10 Assuming no parents move their children out of the school as a result of it attaining VA status, the size of the existing and proposed school shows that there will be few places available at the time of opening. It is difficult to predict the extent to which parents will move children who have already embarked on a secondary education at another state funded school to vacant year 8 to 11 places at the VA academy. The most significant impact on other schools is therefore likely to be on future year 7 intakes.

4.11 The Academy's draft admissions criteria state that 75% of places will be available to children whose parents are seeking an Islamic education with the other 25% available to children of other faiths. It is not clear what the demand from other faiths will be but it is fair to say that experience elsewhere shows this is likely to be very limited. The school plans to admit children from across the city, in proportion to the Muslim population in individual wards. No data is available to examine this pattern in detail although the majority of the Muslim population is in the East Central area.

4.12 At the moment, the sole admissions criterion is effectively the ability to pay the fees. This means that the advent of voluntary aided status is likely to result in a completely different pattern of residence of pupils and one that is hard to predict. Neither is it easy to ascertain which elements of the Muslim community the Academy will most appeal to and where these people live. Demand may be differentiated by socio-economic circumstances or by particular ethnic groups. The majority of Leicester's Muslim community is linked to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh with a relatively new Somali community having recently established itself.

4.13 Within the City, the schools with the largest Muslim pupil populations are ***Moat*** (81% Muslim out of 1068 pupils), ***Crown Hills*** (54% Muslim out of 1164 pupils), and ***Judgemeadow*** (28% Muslim out of 1154 pupils). Many Muslim families have chosen to send their children to single sex schools. 18% of the 1102 girls at ***Sir Jonathan North*** are Muslim as are 16% of the 1131 boys at ***Lancaster***. There are virtually no empty places in any of these schools which have all ensured that the overall educational provision they make is compatible with the expectations of most Muslim families.

4.14 Given the proposed admissions policy the impact on any one school in numerical terms may well be negligible. It remains to be seen whether the school proves to be particularly attractive to parents of pupils with different levels of attainment and if there will be a consequent implication for the pupil attainment

profile of other schools. The SOC will want to consider admissions issues as part of its overall evaluation of any proposal to open a VA academy.

4.15 As the Academy currently has more girls than boys it may be that demand for places might be stronger from the parents of girls. Some 18% of girls at **Sir Jonathan North School** (planned intake of 240 per year) are from Muslim backgrounds. The Islamic Academy will prove an attractive option for some of these pupils and their parents, especially for groups who are most critical of secular provision for subjects such as physical education and drama. However, other Muslim parents value the fact that their girls can attend a single sex school that is culturally diverse and regarded as safe and successful. The ethos of the Academy will be significant. This school anticipates that the Islamic Academy is likely to have an impact on its intake but sees this impact as difficult to predict. Any impact is likely to be on the overall makeup of the intake rather than on the number of pupils admitted.

### ***Stakeholder Perceptions***

4.16 The teachers professional associations are against this proposal in principle and because of its possible adverse effect on other schools in the area. The Church of England are supportive and would be prepared to give practical support to help the VA school establish itself. The LSC would wish to explore the post 16 progression routes followed by pupils on leaving the school and would be concerned if these pupils did not appear to be accessing the full range of provision being followed by the wider cohort of pupils. The 11-16 age range does not fit well with the LSC's overall 14-19 perspective.

4.17 Other headteachers hold the view that their schools are able to cater for the needs of most Muslims and that the goal of community cohesion is more important than emphasising parental choice that results in social and cultural separation. Leicester is seen as a successful culturally diverse community. It is believed that a shared educational experience has contributed to this. This is an important issue for the City to consider. The debate will also be found within the Muslim community itself and it would be instructive for the LEA to invite comment from all sectors of the Muslim community.

4.18 Given the Government's recent history of support for new faith schools, the record of academic success of the current Academy, and the very significant parental demand for places it is likely that a VA school would receive the necessary DfES capital support. The proposers of this initiative will have a very strong educational case for gaining VA status. In determining whether to support the plans, the City will want to consider the extent to which the establishment of the school is also consistent with its wider social and cultural priorities and ambitions.

## **5 Other Considerations**

### ***Overall Rationale and Consultation***

5.1 There is no overall explicitly stated strategy for the next stage of the development of educational provision in the City. Existing documents such as the education development plan and the school organisation plan provide no context in which the existing proposals evaluated in this paper are placed. Similarly, little mention is made of the City's Education Action Zones and the Excellence in Cities initiative. This is very much an exploratory phase but there is a need to tie all elements of the LEA's planning together into a coherent overall framework.

5.2 Key stakeholders such as headteachers and community groups recognise the need for change and are broadly supportive of innovative solutions. There is also acceptance that the LEA needs to further improve standards and address the out City migration of pupils. It is accepted that this is important for the overall well-being of the City, not just for the success of its education service. All want more information and more consultation so that they can engage with the current proposals. Whilst general support is forthcoming, colleagues are unable to see the overall rationale. Their support for any subsequent initiative will be essential and any loss of their goodwill and positive involvement in debates will make the challenges facing the LEA even more difficult to address.

5.3 There is a view amongst secondary headteachers that the recent reorganisation of secondary schools was poorly conceived, poorly implemented and yet to embed effectively. Some believe that this process has, in itself, accelerated the migration of pupils from City schools. They are wary of further change and would want more confidence that the next phase would be better managed in all respects. This includes having more details and opportunities to be consulted at this very early stage. The commitment to inclusive secondary schools is welcomed but there is concern that this will make the adaption of other schools more difficult if resources are concentrated in any new provision.

5.4 The debate around these proposals needs to give an even higher profile to issues such as parental choice, diversity of provision, innovation, community cohesion, social inclusion, collaboration between schools, and community engagement. It should have a vision of the kind of City that people would like to live in and the kind of education that would support this vision. When they can see them, stakeholders are supportive of such big-picture objectives.

### ***Information Availability***

5.5 Stakeholders want to know more about the City Academy, its potential sponsors and specialism, etc. Clearly much work has been done that is not in the public domain which can clarify many of these issues and assuage many



concerns, including many of those raised by the teachers professional associations.

### ***Diversity***

5.6 Little is said about the race equality angles of these proposals, including the impact on the ethnic make up of particular schools and the views of different ethnic communities. In relation to the Islamic Academy proposals there is also likely to be an important debate to be had within the Muslim community. These issues might be addressed in any subsequent consultation.

### ***Aggregate Impact***

5.7 Secondary headteachers in particular are keen to explore the aggregated impact of these proposals should they all go ahead. They have a very specific concern about the possible re-introduction of a small secondary school subsidy as well as the extent of the existing primary school subsidy.

5.8 The possible impact of the Islamic Academy proposal is described in section 4 above. There will clearly be some impact on the schools in the central and Eastern areas but this is more likely to be in terms of changes to the overall proportion of Muslim pupils in the school rather than to overall pupil numbers. The same schools are unlikely to be affected by the proposed City Academy, the impact of which is most likely to be felt by New College and, to a lesser extent, Riverside. These issues are explored in section 2 above. The combined effect of both Academies opening at the same time is unlikely to be felt by the schools nearest to the new provision. The knock-on effects on other schools, especially New College, is likely to be more significant. The current level of attainment at the school, the number of surplus places, the challenging circumstances being faced, and the relatively low level of parental confidence outside its immediate community, compound this situation.

5.9 If there were also to be new secondary provision on the Wycliffe site the adverse impact on New College would be even greater. A new school would also magnify the challenges facing Riverside if it were to attract back Braunstone pupils currently making the longer journey to Riverside.

5.10 The City Academy is the element of these proposals most likely to reverse out-City pupil migration, although this is complicated by the year six intake arrangements of the nearby Leicestershire middle schools as described in paragraphs 2.42 - 2.43 whilst the Islamic Academy will obviously reduce the number of City pupils in independent schools.

