

Energy Coast UTC: enhanced impact assessment, July 2013

- 1 Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 (later as amended by the Education Act 2011) places a duty on the Secretary of State to take into account what the impact of establishing the institution would likely be on maintained schools, Academies, institutions within the further education sector and alternative provision in the area in which the institution is (or is proposed to be) situated. Any adverse impact will need to be balanced against the benefits of establishing the new school.
- 2 On 11 December 2012 I wrote to the Corporate Director of Children's Services at Cumbria County Council formally to seek the Council's views on the Energy Coast UTC proposal. This letter followed up earlier, extensive discussions between the Council, the Department and the UTC sponsors, which had been held to address the Council's concerns about, and opposition to, the UTC proposal. These concerns had been aired first by then [REDACTED] at the UTC application stage in March 2012.
- 3 The Council's 25 January 2013 response to my letter showed that it opposed the Energy Coast UTC model on the grounds that it would impact negatively on current schools, potentially leading to closures which, in their view, would limit choice for learners. The Council proposed an alternative model for the UTC where it would be sited on two campus-style co-locations, alongside mainstream schools, enabling collaboration on Key Stage 4 core curriculum provision and sharing of some back-office and other services – but crucially the UTC would not be a distinct, stand-alone UTC.
- 4 Meanwhile, Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) funding has been made available to replace two under-subscribed Workington schools, Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College, with a single school. The Council told the UTC Trust and the Department that the UTC proposal threatened the viability of this PSBP plan.
- 5 The UTC sponsors met several times with the Council to discuss how the UTC proposal might best fit with the Council's broader education plans, including the PSBP merger. The purpose of those meetings was to enable the UTC sponsors to decide whether they would wish to reconsider their proposal to accommodate the Council's counter-model, and if so to approach the DfE with its business case for changing its current UTC proposal. The sponsors decided that they wanted to press ahead with the original UTC proposal without making any changes.
- 6 The Council's concerns also attracted the interest of [REDACTED] who wrote to then Minister Lord Hill on 3 December 2012 asking whether Lord Hill would meet the Council's Corporate Director of Children's Services to discuss the Council's alternative model for a West Cumbrian UTC. Lord Hill replied that discussions between the Energy Coast UTC sponsors and the Council had explored whether their respective proposals might be brought together, but that the UTC sponsors had concluded from those discussions that they did not wish to seek the Department's approval to revise the existing UTC proposal to accommodate the Council's

alternative model. Lord Hill noted that he was aware also of the PSPB plan to merge two current secondary schools in Workington into one new school, and that officials were continuing to discuss with the Council its concerns about the impact the UTC might have on the viability of the PSBP plan. This threat has since receded as the merger plan underpinning the PSBP project has stalled with no imminent solution apparent.

- 7 As noted above, plans for the future of the two Workington schools have already been formed by the Council, but the PSBP investment is currently on hold. The Council has expressed concern that the UTC would adversely affect the merger project, but that is not the reason the PSBP project is on hold. The schools both took the decision to pursue academisation shortly after the detailed PSBP development process commenced. The prospective academy sponsor, Bright Tribe, had discussions with Academies Unit about the possibility of conversion of the individual schools, followed by a merger after completion of the conversion process, for both schools. Bright Tribe has now chosen to withdraw from potential sponsorship of one of the schools, Southfield.
- 8 The PSBP investment was approved on the basis of a merged school. If the merger had taken place after both schools had converted to academies, they would still be eligible for PSBP investment. If the Governing Bodies of both schools had not taken the decision to pursue an academy sponsor then the development of the PSBP scheme would continue with the Council. If academisation of only one of the schools is pursued then this would mean the PSBP programme board would have to re-consider the place of both schools in the programme and their eligibility for investment.
- 9 The Council's January 2013 letter also disputed the data used by the UTC sponsors to determine the number of young people in each of the 11 community towns from which it aimed to draw its intake, and questioned whether applicants would be admitted in line with the proportions proposed by the UTC. This means that the Council suspects the UTC would attract more applicants from Workington and Whitehaven than envisaged and that this would exacerbate its concerns about the UTC's impact on existing provision.
- 10 Data for the local area indicate the UTC could have a high impact on the two Workington schools and a moderate impact on seven other schools within the proposed catchment area. The two Workington schools are within the average distance travelled to secondary schools within Cumbria. Of the two schools, Southfield Technology would appear to be most likely to lose pupils to the UTC given its 1.6 mile proximity from the

proposed site of the UTC, the large proportion of surplus places it currently carries and its low attainment levels.

- 11 Despite the adverse impact the UTC could have on some local schools, it is evident from the statutory consultation findings and from the employer support for the project that there is demand for the UTC and that it will enhance parental choice in the area. The UTC sponsors have shown willingness to help mitigate the impact on individual schools through use of an over-subscription criterion which structures intake in line with community town populations. Furthermore, the UTC's education delivery model involves some outsourcing of teaching costs which could involve partnership with local schools.

Annex B1: Data

Secondary Schools

School name	School type	Capacity	Surplus %	Attainment in 2011/12	Ofsted grade	Impact rating
Southfield Technology College	Community School	898	49.0	42%	Satisfactory	High
Stainburn School and Science College	Community School	890	1.8	44%	Requires Improvement	High
St Joseph's Catholic High School, Business & Enterprise College	Voluntary Aided School	639	-3.9	51%	Satisfactory	Moderate
St Benedict's Catholic High School	Voluntary Aided School	1411	5.7	60%	Inadequate	Moderate
Whitehaven School	Community School	1465	24.8	41%	Inadequate	Moderate
Netherall School	Community School	1085	37.2	49%	Satisfactory	Moderate
Cockermouth School	Community School	1423	0.3	53%	Good	Minimal
West Lakes Academy	Academy Sponsor Led	1257	22.7	56%	Satisfactory	Moderate
Beacon Hill Community School	Community School	350	53.7	31%	Requires Improvement	Moderate
Keswick School	Academy convertor	1079	2.8	69%	Outstanding	Minimal
Solway Community Technology College	Community College	305	46.9	42%	Good	Moderate

The Nelson Thomlinson School	Community School	1499	6.0	69%	Outstanding	Minimal
------------------------------	------------------	------	-----	-----	-------------	---------

Post-16 Colleges

College name	Ofsted	Number of learners aged 16-18	Proportion of learners aged 16-18	Average Point Score per student 2012	Impact Rating
Lakes College, West Cumbria	Good	1075	56.7	469.1	Moderate
Carlisle College	Good	1015	55.8	464.7	Minimal
Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College	Good	833	99.9	775.1	Minimal

Basic need

Need for schoolplaces at district level and in the local area					
Basic need statistics	Allerdale	Carlisle	Copeland		
Total school capacity	8,101	7,741	4,815		
% of surplus places	13.5%	13.6%	12.5%		
% increase in number of secondary places needed by 2013/14 (basic need)	None	None	None		
Secondary pupil population increase between 2011/12 and 2017/18	-12%	0.0%	-7.4%		
Basic need statistics	Eden	South Lakeland	--		Local area

Need for school places at district level and in the local area				
Total school capacity	3,680	7,951		8,894
% of surplus places	5.4%	5.9%		15.7%
% increase in number of secondary places needed by 2013/14 (basic need)	None	None		
Secondary pupil population increase between 2011/12 and 2017/18	-13.3%	-9.3%		

Source. LA Level data from the School Census SCAP 2011, School Level Census Jan 2011, DSD