

# The Swan School

## Section 10 Consultation Report



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## 1. Executive Summary

In 2015 the River Learning Trust (at the time called The Cherwell School Academy Trust) applied to open a new school, The Swan School, to meet the basic need of school places in the City of Oxford. The application for The Swan School gained considerable local support and was approved in September 2015.

The school is proposed to be an 11-18 community comprehensive secondary school serving Old Marston and the surrounding areas of Oxford. It will meet the urgent need for school places in the City and in particular the areas surrounding the proposed site for the school. It is due to open to Year 7 pupils in 2019 with 120 students, growing to admit 180 Year 7 pupils each September, and having approximately 1,200 students including a Sixth Form when full.

As part of the process to open a new Free School the Trust is required to hold a statutory Section 10 consultation. This took place between 16<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

In addition to the Trust's consultation period, Galliford Try, the appointed contractors for The Swan School, also held 2 public drop-in events for local residents to review the plans for the proposed site on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November. The outcomes from their own consultation process is to be published separately.

## 2. The Consultation Process

Throughout the consultation period information was made available on The Swan School website:

<http://theswanschool.org.uk/consultation/> and <http://theswanschool.org.uk/resources/>

Paper copies of the information were also made available at various consultation events. The consultation was promoted via 12 local primary schools and The Oxford Mail as well as via The Swan School email circulation list, which reaches over 450 email addresses.

*Public Consultation events, held at New Marston Primary School*

- Monday 16th October 6-8pm
- Wednesday 1st November 6-8pm
- Tuesday 7th November 6-8pm

*Consultation Events at Primary Schools*

- St Michael's 16<sup>th</sup> October
- St Nicholas' 17<sup>th</sup> October
- St Michael's 19<sup>th</sup> October
- St Joseph's 14<sup>th</sup> November
- St Aloysius' 15<sup>th</sup> November
- St Barnabas' 16<sup>th</sup> November

The consultation provided materials which allowed responses to the following questions:

- *Please provide comments and feedback on the **Vision and Principles of The Swan School***
- *Please provide comments and feedback on **What will The Swan School be like?***
  - *(please feel free to comment on any or all of the sub-sections of this information: The academic curriculum and classroom experience, teaching, supporting the needs of all*

*students, behaviour, working with parents, the Arts, Sport, Health and Wellbeing, The Swan School Sixth Form, A uniform for the Swan School?)*

- *Please provide comments and feedback on the **Admissions and Catchment Area***
- *Please provide comments and feedback on **Being part of the community***
- *Please any other comments and feedback on **about The Swan School***
- *Should the Trustees of the River Learning Trust enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education in order to open The Swan School? We are required to ask this question which allows you to show your support for the opening of the school.*

The consultation questionnaire also asked individuals to identify to which stakeholder groups or groups they belonged to and if they had a child in Year 5 and were thinking on sending their child to The Swan School

There were approximately 120 people who engaged with members of the Trust at the consultation events and there were 82 questionnaires completed (70 online and 12 on paper).

### **3. Findings from the Consultation**

#### **Stakeholder groups:**

• a parent, guardian or carer:	62
• a local resident:	29
• a community member:	20
• a governor of another school:	6
• a teacher:	4
• a local business employee:	3
• an elected member:	2
• a pupil or student:	1
• Local authority employee:	1
• a local business owner:	1
• a trade union official:	0

The majority of responses to the consultation were positive and a narrative is provided in section 4 outlining some further detail.

Where questions asked for comments and feedback on the materials provided, as outlined in section 2 above, responses can be approximately categorised as follows:

*Supportive comments : 30%*

*Unsupportive comments: 10% (The majority related to the location and traffic concerns)*

*Neither support nor unsupportive / raising points for consideration and/or clarification: 20% Left blank: 40%*

The response to the final question is given below:

**Should the Trustees of the River Learning Trust enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education to open The Swan School? We are required to ask this question which allows you to show your support for the opening of the school.**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75%	60
No	15%	12
Unsure	5%	8

Of those who responded 'No' to this question, 7 identified as being a local resident and the main concern raised was the location of the school. Two questionnaires left this question blank.

The only other question with a yes/no response was regarding having a child in Year 5 and likelihood of choosing The Swan School.

**Do you have a child currently in Year 5?** 12 responded yes to this question

**Are you interested in applying for a place for your child joining The Swan School in Year 7 in 2019 as either a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice school?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	42%	5
Maybe	50%	6
No	8%	1

#### 4. Analysing the findings from the Consultation

**Question:** Please provide comments and feedback on the **Vision and Principles of The Swan School**

Many comment expressed their support for the vision and principles of the school:

*"Excellent vision and principles which embrace inclusiveness and equality of opportunity."*

*"Encouraging hard work and aspiration for young people to allow them to flourish in their academic achievements and social development and community engagement will provide a complete education."*

Where there were queries raised about the vision it was often related to concerns about the extent to which we emphasised the importance of an academic curriculum:

*"...supporting less academic pupils who excel at sport, are talented artists, have a strong aptitude for social work, etc. I think this not only supports students who might not be particularly academically able, but also shows students who are academically able that there are many diverse areas in which people can be valued members of a community."*

Other points raised were the importance of good behaviour, social skills, anti-bullying, oracy, well-being, creativity and a commitment to meeting the individual needs of all pupils.

There were also comments about the links to The Cherwell School being positive, whilst noting they will be different schools.

**Question:** Please provide comments and feedback on **What will The Swan School be like?**

In this section, there were 11 comments which supported the introduction of a school uniform and 6 preferring a non-uniform policy; the majority of respondents did not comment on this issue specifically. The reasons given on both sides of the argument were in line with the materials provided as part of the consultation process.

In this section, some also commented on the possible later start times or different start times for older and younger students, where there was a range of views with both later and earlier start times being preferred by different respondents.

Typical comments included:

*"I would like it to not have a uniform. I think when schools become too concerned about appearance they lose sight of what is important: behaviour, high educational achievement and teaching children to be kind/compassionate etc."*

*"I would like to see a uniform for the swan school as this provides a sense of belonging for pupils and makes everyone equal. Parents can't always afford top named branded clothing and that puts kids in competition with each other."*

As in the previous section, some concerns were raised about the nature of the curriculum proposed and how it will support those students who do not go on to University or Higher-Level Apprenticeships.

*"The curriculum appears very narrow what does traditional really mean and is it really meeting the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? "*

The issue of the school growing from Year 7 upwards illustrated the support for having a 6<sup>th</sup> Form in place as soon as is possible (currently planned for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of opening):

*"I have slight concerns about my child not having any older peers but understand that a sixth form will be in place in the second year of opening which will help address that. I like the idea of the older children having more contact and activities with their younger peers."*

The desire for specialist subject teaching and a range of extra-curricular activities being in place for students even when the school was small was also raised. This was also linked to the desire to know more about the school once staff are appointed with concerns about teacher recruitment difficulties in Oxfordshire and if The Swan school would be affected by this.

Other queries related to wishing to know the details of how the school will arrange its pastoral care, its caring for pupils with more complex needs and its approach to providing a high-quality dining experience for students.

**Question:** Please provide comments and feedback on the **Admissions and Catchment Area**

A number of respondents who were parents used this section to express their desire for the school in its proposed location due to being unable to attend their current schools of their choice.

*“Our children are unlikely to get into Cherwell. We are not in the catchment area of Cheney school. So, our children will have to get two buses or be driven to an alternative school unless the Swan School opens.”*

There were also a number of observations / queries made about the proposed catchment area and admissions rules which are listed below:

- The inclusion of Barton was queried given the link Cheney school has with local schools
- That the catchment area and priority given to students eligible for the Pupil Premium may create an undesirable difference in the mix of students at The Cherwell and The Swan
- That the priority given to students eligible for the pupil premium is unfair to other families
- That it would make more sense to change the catchment area of The Cherwell and The Swan at this point
- That the large size of the proposed catchment area may encourage some students to travel by car which would increase traffic (although some respondents wanted it to be bigger)
- That siblings should be higher up the priority order than is currently the case
- That we should consider a ‘seed point’ approach to the catchment area
- That it is essential to minimise student travel time

Some respondents also used this section to express their concerns about the impact of the school on local traffic (see below).

**Question:** Please provide comments and feedback on the **Being part of the community**

A number of respondents were very positive about the consultation material provided about this topic:

*“I think the school will be excellent for the community especially as some of the local children currently have to travel a long distance to school at present due to their not being enough places at the local school.”*

*“I welcome the community and School being able to benefit each other - Marston is a fantastic community.”*

Local residents and some community members did however express significant concerns about the proposed location of the school and its impact on Traffic and St Nicholas Primary School.

*“Clearly not part of the community because the site will generate inordinate amounts of traffic and is inaccessible to children walking or cycling from the new developments at Barton park.”*

*“The traffic in the area is already hideous so it beggars belief that it will be made even worse.”*

Although there was also a view that by having a more local school it would reduce some traffic currently caused by students having to travel out of the city to preferred schools.

*“Oxford city desperately and urgently needs a new secondary school. Although there may be spare capacity in schools in the greater Oxfordshire region, we should be looking to reduce the amount of traffic on our roads not increasing it by forcing local children to travel to outlying areas.”*

**Question:** Please provide any other comments and feedback on **about The Swan School**

In this final section, respondents often choose to re-emphasise points they had made previously or made comments aligned with those made in other sections by other respondents. As such the desire for the school to be open on time was clear from some and the significant concerns about the location and implications for traffic from others. Typical comments were as follows:

*“The need for a new comprehensive is a necessity rather than any sort of luxury. We, like many parents in central Oxford, are largely uninterested in ‘parental choice’. We want a good local comprehensive so that our children are not forced to travel miles across Oxford and beyond in order to go to school.”*

*“Marston desperately needs another/ access to a new Secondary School and I am pleased that it looks like such a good one will be opening.”*

*“We are really excited that the school is opening and when my child (currently in year three is old enough)- we shall be applying as a first choice.”*

*“I think this is a bad decision in terms of location. There are already major traffic problems in the area and major hospitals nearby.”*

*“I am deeply concerned about traffic access cutting across the existing cycle path. I am extremely saddened that the proposed access road from Ferry Link Road will result in St Nicholas' Primary School losing a significant amount of its playing field.” [Although the school receives significant investment in new Sports areas as a result]*

Some respondents also raised the importance of sustainability:

*“The building should design in carbon-neutral/eco-measures/ natural light /photovoltaic etc to make it as cheap as possible to run for the future (ventilation / heating bills).”*

## **5. River Learning Trust's Response to the Consultation**

The Trust has found the Section 10 consultation exercise to be extremely valuable in supporting our development of the school and the responses continue to shape our thinking as we move towards finalising our plans.

Rather than respond to each of the points raised in the consultation individually we will continue to update materials on our website in the coming months and prior to the release of our prospectus for the school, planned for summer 2018.

Specifically, we shall:

- Clarify further the rationale for, and details of, our curriculum and its suitability for all students in preparing them for life both now and in the future
- Continue to work with the ESFA and Galliford Try to produce a suitable Travel Plan to reduce the impact of the school on local residents and traffic in the locality
- Ensure that our prospectus, and /or supporting materials provides enough information for prospective parents, recognising that as a new school we will need to provide more details than is often the case for an established school

- Work with Oxfordshire County Council and the DfE to ensure our catchment area and admissions rules are the most suitable for the school and community, noting the comments and issues raised in the consultation.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Trust is very grateful for all response to the consultation. We recognise the challenges posed by the proposed site, and also the need for additional school places in the City which can be met by The Swan School. Following the outcome of this Consultation the Trust will continue to work with stakeholders, DfE, ESFA, Galliford Try and OCC to secure the opening of The Swan School.

*December 2017*