

# SCHOOL REORGANISATION

Briefing Note



## DISPOSAL OF REDUNDANT SCHOOL SITES

All community school sites and buildings are owned by the City Council and decisions about their future development rests with the Council. However, disposing of such sites involves a rigorous legal process.

The massive investment of public funds in school sites and buildings puts local councils under a duty to ensure that the community obtains the maximum benefit from these assets. The best way to ensure this is to realise the maximum value from redundant school sites and reinvest that capital in new education facilities and school building programmes.

In law, local councils are required to seek government approval for the sale of assets such as school playing fields, playgrounds and recreation areas on school sites. Statutory consultations are required as part of the approval process with, amongst others, Sport England, the national organisation that advises government of the impact on sporting facilities in the local community. Sport England considers the whole proposal, including plans for the new school, and looks at the capacity and quality of existing sporting facilities and whether the proposed development would improve sporting facilities overall.

The value of any redundant school site depends on the scale of development that the site would support and whether planning permission would be granted. The Council, like any developer, is subject to local and regional planning policy and national planning guidelines. If it has no other practical public service use for the site in question, the Council could choose to dispose of it without planning permission, or enter into an agreement with a developer.

Where the Council seeks to amalgamate two schools in a new school on a new site, the funds released from the redundant sites would normally be invested in the new school. However, the amounts raised would only go part way towards the cost of building a new school.

The Council would also be required to seek planning permission for building a school on a new site and the Planning Authority, in deciding whether to grant planning permission, would consider issues such as the loss of public open space, the impact on local highways and the environment, and the views of the public, balanced against the public benefit of better education facilities for the local community. Like all other planning applications, the public has an opportunity to comment before planning permission is considered.