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Page 11
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Page 14
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Page 16
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News

900-place free school planned to tackle shortage

PLANS for a new 900 student capacity secondary school 'between Walton and Molesey have been put forward in a bid to tackle a predicted shortage of school places.
ElmWey Learning Trust, which operates Heathside School in Weybridge, submitted a bid to the Department for Education (DfE) last week.
Provisionally named Elmbridge Free School, if

accepted a first intake of 150 students is scheduled for September 2019.
A spokesman for ElmWey said: "The number of secondary school aged children in Elmbridge will rise dramatically over the next few years and the predicted shortage of secondary school places will be 215 by 2022.
"Existing schools do not have the spaces to accommodate this increase. ElmWey hopes to open the school in

the area between Walton and Molesey which is where the need for school places is likely to be the greatest."
It will be a state funded free school, the spokesman said, non-selective and non-faith based.
"It will grow year-on-year and when fully operational it will have 900 students in the age range 11-16," he added.
Heathside is a 'very successful' secondary school, the spokesman said, highly

ranked in terms of student progress and always oversubscribed.
"For the ElmWey Trust, the most important feature of the new school is that it replicates the ethos and standards already achieved at Heathside," he said.
Anne Cullum, ElmWey's executive principal, leads Heathside School and will oversee the new project.
She said: "We want to create an outstanding school to

serve the local community, a school where academic outcomes are excellent for all our students.
"We will use our experience of success at Heathside to create a school which students are proud to attend and enables them to access employment and further education without restriction."
Nick Price, vice principal, highlighted an increasing need for education provision in the area.

He said: "We know that the supply of secondary school places is a big issue for Elmbridge parents and that data shows a growing problem over the next few years.
"The government is pushing the Free School route as a way to open new schools.
"We hope that our bid will be a solution to this growing problem."
The first free school opened in 2011 and there are now more than 300,

including more than 120 secondary free schools.
They are not under the control of the local authority and are funded directly by the Department for Education.
The ElmWey spokesman added that the Surrey local authority is supportive of its plan.
In March last year Cobham Free School was unsuccessful in a bid to build a new free school in the Molesey area.
Provisionally called Imber

Court School, more than 700 people had expressed an interest in an East Molesey secondary.
However, the DfE rejected the bid and approved 49 other schools across the country.
ElmWey Learning Trust said it is planning a series of events to keep the community updated on its project.
Parents can register an interest at www.elmbridgefree-school.co.uk.