

Cabinet

Report Title:	Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan
Meeting Date:	22 March 2016
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
Local Councillor(s):	All Councillors
Director:	Sue Cook - Director of Children's Services
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Gavin Bultitude - Assistant Director Resources and Support, CYP
Author:	Pete Mumford – Senior Infrastructure Officer, CYP (Contact Tel: 01473 260767 / E-mail - pete.mumford@suffolk.gov.uk)

Brief summary of report

1. In December 2014 Cabinet approved a new plan, the Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan (ELIP), which outlined the education and learning infrastructure needs of the county based on both existing population growth and proposed housing development. At that Cabinet meeting it was agreed that the next version of the plan would return to Cabinet to be reviewed to update councillors on the issues therein.
2. This updated plan has been shared over the last year with colleagues from the district and borough councils, parish councils and schools to enable closer working on the solutions. It has also allowed officers internal to Suffolk County Council, such as Highways and Planning to name but two, to have earlier sight of the proposed solutions and timeframes and to be able to address any pertinent issues much sooner in the process.
3. The plan has played a significant part in a recent Cabinet approval process for the creation of seven new primary schools and two new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools in the county in the next three years. It is anticipated that this is the first tranche of new schools that will be developed with an estimated 20 new primary schools and a similar number of school expansions required by 2031 if expected levels of housing development are approved.

What is Cabinet being asked to decide?

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Cabinet is asked to approve the latest version (v2.1) of the Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan (Appendix 1). 5. Cabinet is also asked to confirm that the next version of the plan (V3) is put on the forward agenda when completed as part of the annual review process agreed previously. |
|--|

Reason for recommendation

6. The Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan is designed to be a living document that is continually updated to reflect the changing demographics of Suffolk and the subsequent infrastructure needs of education and learning. It is designed to be the discussion piece with colleagues internally and externally to the organisation to allow for a better and earlier understanding of the issues the county faces.
7. It was agreed at the Cabinet meeting in December 2014 that the plan would be reviewed on an annual basis by Cabinet. Although the plan is reviewed regularly by an officer-led board it is critical that the plan is shared much wider to allow for challenges and suggestions to be made against the assumptions and planned solutions within.

What are the key issues to consider?

8. With tens of thousands of new homes being proposed through numerous housing developments across the county over the next 15/20 years the Local Authority must ensure it makes best use of its own Basic Need funding and the funding contributions available from developers. These school sites must also be 'future-proofed' so they are able to accommodate additional places that it will be necessary for us to provide, where appropriate, through other developments in the years to come. To do this Suffolk County Council needs to work across a much wider spectrum of partners than we have previously in order to maximise future intelligence and resource. No one organisation can do this in isolation and this document will help facilitate those closer working relationships.
9. The system is a fluid one, some of the developments mentioned within the plan may not happen whilst new ones are being added on a near weekly basis. This means this document has to be amended, updated and reviewed on a regular basis to cope with that fluidity and ensure it is addressing the issues appropriately.
10. Approval of this plan is not giving approval of the individual solutions therein. Any new school project would be brought to Cabinet to evidence the need and seek approval to proceed through the existing approval processes.

What are the resource and risk implications?

11. There are areas of the county where the capacity of education and learning is already stretched to the limit. Suffolk County Council has the statutory responsibility to provide school places for the young people of Suffolk but without appropriate lead-in times to plan the intended solutions to satisfy this obligation there is a danger that young people may not be able to access 'local' schools.
12. The population of the county is growing and in some areas there are high levels of approved or proposed housing development. This will result in a need for a significant increase in the number of school places through building new schools and expansion of existing schools.

13. The Council has limited funding for providing new school places and otherwise investing in the education and learning infrastructure. Recent changes to the DfE capital allocation methodology have reduced the grant funding for the provision of new school places through population growth, known as Basic Need, from £11m to the current allocation of £2 million. To this end Suffolk County Council has committed to a significant level of borrowing to ensure that adequate funds are available to meet the solutions laid out in the plan.
14. However, unless realistic and appropriate levels of developer contributions can be secured to cover the costs of required infrastructure arising from the extensive housing development then the combination of reduced funding and increased demand creates a risk to the Council being able to provide sufficient school places. Therefore we need better long term planning and closer working relationships with colleagues in District and Borough Councils to ensure that we can manage the growth in school age children within these reduced resources.

What are the timescales associated with this decision?

15. Not all of the local plans can offer complete certainty about the timelines and scale of the new housing developments. The plan is therefore long term and covers a period of approximately ten years, although some of the development outlined in it may take place over an even longer timescale.
16. Version 3 of this plan will refresh and build upon the work undertaken to date which has focussed mainly on the provision of primary school places due to this being the fastest growing demographic across the county. There is a need to expand on the solutions for Early Years, Secondary, SEND and Post-16 provision and version 3 will include the solutions to these, as applicable, alongside those already in the plan. It is anticipated that the first draft of this plan will be available for circulation in the summer of 2016.
17. The plan will also expand on the issue of school sustainability and surplus places as we see some areas of the county where growth and housing development is not prevalent and in some cases where school age population is declining leaving some schools with large, empty buildings to maintain without the pupil funding available to them to address this and other infrastructure needs required to run a successful school.

Alternative options

18. Suffolk County Council and colleagues across the county could return to the ways of working previously adopted whereby housing development and areas of growth are addressed on a case by case basis at the point of identification or approval. However to do this in isolation of other developments and growth would leave an approach that is not joined up, does not make best use of resources and economies of scale and is not future proofed.

Who will be affected by this decision?

19. This decision will affect the following due to the risk of not supplying the school places required;
 - a) Families and the communities in those areas of the county where there is an increasing need for school places.
 - b) Those schools which will need to expand to take in additional pupils.
 - c) Those schools which have surplus capacity or are at risk of being unsustainable due to low pupil numbers.

Main body of report

20. Suffolk is to set to see extensive countywide housing development in the next fifteen to twenty years. These developments will have a significant impact on existing infrastructure, none more so than that of education and learning. If all of the developments come to fruition it could mean a potential increase in demand for thousands of new pupil places within our primary and secondary schools.
21. The required places born out of these developments are in addition to natural population increases in some areas of the county with hotspots identified in Ipswich, Forest Heath and Lowestoft. Early indications of the education and learning infrastructure required to serve these developments suggests that these combined increases in the demand for pupil places may lead to the creation of approximately 20 new primary schools, 3 new secondary schools and 25 school expansions over that time period.
22. Suffolk needs to create new places to meet a shifting population and whilst quality of provision is taken into consideration when achieving this it must be recognised that geographical and financial constraints play a pivotal part in finding appropriate solutions. Any school that expands would be supported throughout the process to ensure it can take on new places without having a detrimental effect on the existing pupils and staff. This means ensuring all infrastructure needs are taken into account, for example catering capabilities, travel plans and staffing/management structures.
23. The Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan (ELIP) sets out Suffolk County Council's challenges to meet these statutorily required infrastructure changes and the approach to providing solutions on an area basis. It is recognised that not all of the proposed development will happen and as such the document is designed to be continually updated, amended and reviewed as each development progresses through the planning systems and certainty is gained.
24. The first versions of the document have been unanimously welcomed by colleagues in the district and borough councils to bring together the local authorities to share intelligence and find innovative and affordable solutions to the issues therein. It has also proved useful in bringing teams internal to Suffolk County Council together earlier in the processes to gain views and suggestions on the proposed solutions.

25. The plan, through the work of officer groups that review the issues and solutions, has been pivotal in creating a capital programme for the next three years, as recently approved by Cabinet, that includes the creation of seven new primary schools and two new SEND schools alongside a number of school expansion projects.
26. Version 3 of the plan will refresh and update the data so as to include the most appropriate pupil forecasting information and intelligence on the proposed housing development. It will also expand on those areas that to date have been discussed at an officer level as part of the work of the ELIP but has yet to feature heavily in the plan itself. This will give solutions to each of the issues, where appropriate to have them, for young people aged 0-19 and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It will also build upon the equally important issue of school sustainability across the county as the demographics change, particularly in some parts of Suffolk where the school age population is declining and housing growth is not being proposed for the area.

Sources of further information

- a) Version 2.1 of the Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan is attached and can also be found at the link below:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/elip>

- b) To be read in conjunction with the Cabinet Paper on 'New Schools' that was approved by Cabinet on 26th January 2016.

Cabinet Paper – New Schools (from 26th January 2016)

http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181abdf55&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Appendix A – New Schools in Suffolk

http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181abdf56&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Appendix B – Capital Programme 2016-19

http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181abe1a1&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Appendix C – Growth Policy 2015-16

http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181abdf59&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Appendix D - New Primary Schools for Red Lodge and Lakenheath
Suffolk - School specification document for potential sponsors

http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181abdf5a&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

- c) Equality Impact Assessment – Carried out in December 2014 for the original drafting of the plan.

[ELIP - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Document](#)