

Agenda Item 7 - Evidence Set 2

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 6 September 2016

Topic: School Infrastructure and Capacity Planning

Information in this report was produced on behalf of	
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Title:	Place Planning and the effect of Free Schools
Date Submitted:	23rd August 2016

The Education and Learning Infrastructure Plan

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 the additional places that it will be necessary 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 has been the case previously in order to maximise future intelligence and resource.

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.

The plan has been shared over the last 18 months 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.

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.

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 regular 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. Version 3.0 of the plan is currently being drafted and 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 this next version 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 towards the end of the summer of 2016.

The most recent approved version of the plan (version 2.1) can be found at the following link. All future iterations will also be available from here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/education-and-learning-infrastructure-plan/>

Current Place Planning Issues

Pupil place planning pressures in the last few years have focussed on primary provision in Ipswich, Lowestoft and to the west of the county in the Haverhill and Mildenhall areas. This has mainly been through the demographic increases in the school age population rather than through significant housing growth. In the last 3 years over 3,000 places have been added to the existing school system in the county. A list of where these places have been added can be seen in the table shown as **Annex 1**.

Our pupil forecasting data shows that this demographic growth is, in the main, plateauing for primary provision and will begin to impact on secondary provision across the county in the next two to three years. The Schools Infrastructure Team (SIT) will work with the appropriate schools to discuss current and future capacity issues and address any needs for expansion to schools as necessary.

However, the other issue affecting place planning moving forward is that of the housing developments. Whilst the significant housing developments of 1,000 homes or more would normally provide a site and developer contributions to build a new primary school it is some of the smaller developments of 200-500 homes that cause the most issues. This is due to them not being large enough to warrant a new school but yielding enough pupils to require expansion to existing provision which may not be able to expand, particularly in rural areas where schools are much smaller and on compact sites.

Place Planning Process

Once an increase in school age population is identified pupil forecasting data is used to establish the current capacity within the local schools and what effect the increase will have. If there is a need for additional places to be added to a local school this will be decided based upon appropriate location, existing site constraints, affordability and, where possible, the current school performance. This applies to all schools no matter whether they are a maintained school or academy. Once a school is identified the SIT will work with the school to create a feasibility study, undertaken by Concertus, to show the options for expansion that are shared with senior leadership and governors. Once an option is agreed upon Concertus will then create detailed drawings to go to tender and the construction processes begin.

If there is a need to build a new school or add buildings to an existing school these plans are shared with the local community and other key stakeholders through consultation events to ensure all opinions and concerns are discussed and addressed.

Free Schools

Suffolk currently has six Free Schools:

School Name	Location	Date Opened
Stour Valley Community School (11-16 School)	Clare	1st September 2011
IES Breckland (11-16 School)	Brandon	1st September 2012
Beccles Free School (11-16 School)	Beccles	1st September 2012
Saxmundham Free School (11-16 School)	Saxmundham	1st September 2012
Churchill Free School (5-18 Special School)	Haverhill	1st September 2013
Ixworth Free School (11-16 School)	Ixworth	1st September 2014

Suffolk County Council has, little or no say in where Free Schools are approved and created, we are merely one of a number of consultees, and have no formal part in decision making for mainstream free schools. However, the government pledge of opening 500 Free Schools across the country by 2020 has seen an increase in activity and opened up some opportunities for Suffolk County Council to influence the process and try to target Free School applications to where they are needed. Although the likelihood still remains of Free School applications being submitted in areas that SCC do not believe requires additional places, the most recent 'waves' of submissions have allowed SCC to identify and share its own place planning requirements with established Free School and Academy sponsors to encourage them to apply in more useful places. This could lead to schools being built in areas of real need using Free School funding from central government rather than through SCC funding and borrowing.

An example of this is with central Ipswich where SCC has been actively working on the creation of a new primary school in the town centre vicinity, at a cost to SCC of £6-7m. However, through working with the Regional School Commissioner's office and a number of free school providers, we have encouraged these free school providers to look at this area, and two applications for a free school were submitted to the DfE in March 2016 for a central Ipswich primary school. SCC officer have subsequently worked with DfE colleagues to share our site acquisition information and provided demographic data to assist the DfE with finding the most appropriate location. However, it is for the DfE to acquire the site and the final decision rests with them.

Annex 1

Academic Year places start to be available	School name	Original Capacity (exc. Pre-school/Nursery)	Increased Capacity (exc. Pre-school/Nursery)	Number of additional places being provided
2014/15	St Christopher's CEVCP School	315	420	105
2015/16	Clements CP School	210	315	105
2015/16	Gt Heath CP School	420	630	210
2015/16	Hillside Primary School	420	630	210
2015/16	Houldsworth Valley Primary School	210	315	105
2015/16	Kelsale CEVCP School	128	156	28
2015/16	Rendlesham Primary School	210	315	105
2015/16	Rushmere Primary School	420	630	210
2015/16	Saxmundham Primary School	294	315	21
2015/16	St Margaret's CEVA Primary School	210	420	150
2015/16	St Mary's CEVCP School	84	105	21
2015/16	The Glade Primary School	210	315	105
2015/16	The Willows Primary School	210	315	105
2015/16	Trinity CEVAP School	0	315	315
2015/16	West Row CP School	210	270	60
2015/16	Whitehouse Primary School	420	630	210
2016/17	Beck Row CP School	210	315	105
2016/17	Castle Hill Infants/Junior School	525	630	105
2016/17	Kesgrave High School	1753	1813	60
2016/17	Laureate Community Academy	210	240	30
2016/17	Northgate High School	1709	1769	60
2016/17	Oulton Broad Primary School	210	315	105
2016/17	Ranelagh Primary School	210	315	105
2016/17	Roman Hill Primary School	525	585	60
2016/17	The Warren Special School			14
2016/17	The Willows Primary School	315	420	105
Future projects in planning stages				
2017/18	Coupals Primary School	210	420	210
2017/18	Forest Primary School	315	420	105
2017/18	Houldsworth Valley Primary School	315	420	105
2017/18	The Glade Primary School	315	420	105
Totals		10793	14178	3339

The school places delivered in the table above, not including the Future projects which are still to be confirmed, have cost approximately £24m. This is an average place cost of approximately £8,500.