

Forward Plan reference number: FP/045/02/24

Report title: Publication of Statutory Proposals to expand to St Peter's CE Primary School by 105 places from September 2025	
Report to: Councillor Ball - Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life Long Learning and Employability	
Report author: Clare Kershaw – Director for Education	
Date: 22 nd April 2024	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Mark.Pincombe - School Organisation Officer, mark.pincombe@essex.gov.uk Amanda Laycock - Project Sponsor, amanda.laycock@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: Braintree Eastern	

1 Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Investment in the school, St Peter's CE Primary School (the School), delivers on all four strategic aims identified in *Everyone's Essex – Our plan for levelling up the county: 2021-2025*.
- 1.2 This proposal would contribute to the strategic aims of creating a good place for children and families to grow, promoting health and wellbeing for all ages, a high-quality environment and creating a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy.
- 1.3 Delivery of key commitments include delivering infrastructure to support new homes and communities; achieving net-zero, through buildings that will have a net-zero carbon operational design; supporting active travel as part of the built environment of a sustainable, healthy neighbourhood; enabling healthy lifestyles by providing facilities that give focus for the community; supporting high quality education outcomes with facilities that ensure children are able to learn and teachers able to teach in the most conducive environment.
- 1.4 If the recommended option is approved to agree the expansion of the School, Essex residents will benefit from additional, high quality primary provision becoming available in their area from September 2025, increasing their chances of gaining local places for their children in preferred schools. The expansion promotes engagement during those vital early years of schooling and thus increasing the likelihood of future prosperity

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to publish statutory proposals to expand St Peter's CE Primary School, from 315 places (1.5 forms of entry) to 420 places (2 forms of entry) from September 2025.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 The demand for school places continues to grow within the administrative area of Essex County Council (ECC), and ECC has a duty to ensure that every child wanting one has access to a school place. In executing these responsibilities, the ECC also seeks to add value to the educational offer that can be made to parents and carers within a local area, to ensure that learners receive the best possible outcomes from their time in formal education.
- 3.2 Like many places across Essex, the village of Coggeshall is growing as a result of house building activity underway in the local area. Projected pupil numbers, as set out within Essex County Council's school place planning document (*10 Year Plan - Meeting the demand for school places in Essex, 2023-2032*) show a rise over the next few years and as such, these children should ideally be accommodated within local schools.
- 3.3 Should these places not be provided locally then there is a strong possibility that increased car journeys will need to be made outside the local area, in order for parents to secure a preferred primary school placement. However, by enhancing provision that sits directly within the area of demand it is not unreasonable to see this as the more sustainable solution, with children able to walk, cycle or scoot to their local school, reducing congestion and the subsequent impact that that has upon public health.
- 3.4 There is a growing demand for primary school places within the planning group within which St Peter's CE Primary School sits. The ongoing deficit of places in the area over the next decade is illustrated by the following table should no mitigation be forthcoming. Over time several measures could be needed to relieve this forecast pressure on places within the local area, including the expansion of the School.

2. Kelvedon/ Feering/Coggeshall

Current PAN: 130

Current Capacity: 895

Reception Place Forecast

Year	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	32/33
+/-	23	26	7	-3	-9	-12	-16	-20	-24	-28
Feering CE Primary, Kelvedon St Mary's CE Primary Academy, St Peter's CE Primary										

- 3.5 ECC's proposal to increase the number of pupils able to attend the School will ensure that more local children can access a local school place. It will provide more places to meet the growing demand in the area and will enable parents to gain a place for their child at a school rated 'Good' by Ofsted (last inspected in

March 2023). It is supported by the School's senior leadership, and Governing Body.

- 3.6 It is anticipated that the School will grow on a phased basis, as it admits up to 15 additional pupils into its Reception Year cohort year-on-year. The School could be expected to reach its full capacity of 315 places in September 2031
- 3.7 The potential impact of increasing the School's PAN on other local schools has been taken into account.
- 3.8 The proposed expansion will be provided by new, purpose built, accommodation and some internal remodelling. Addition outside space will be provided through a multi use games area (MUGA).
- 3.9 A consultation was undertaken by the School between 5th February and 11th March 2024. Documents outlining the proposal were hosted on the School's website between those dates, with an invitation for interested parties to have their say about the expansion to the School. A public drop in session was held at the school on 12th February 2024.
- 3.10 31 responses were received during the window for comment of which 13 fully supported the proposal and 18 did not fully support the proposal.
- 3.11 7 responses that did not fully support the proposal had concerns around the size of the expanded school and in particular class sizes.
 - 3.11.1 Clearly expanding the school will mean that there will be more pupils on roll. The governing body and senior staff have carefully considered the effect that this would have on the ethos of the school. They are committed to providing a caring and nurturing learning environment and do not believe that increasing the number of pupils will affect this. Officers are confident that the existing leadership team will continue to provide an excellent education for pupils. Standards are monitored carefully at ECC maintained schools and if necessary, support will be given to ensure standards remain high. Due to the expanded accommodation there is not expected to be any increase in class sizes.
- 3.12 5 responses that did not fully support the proposal had concerns around the extra traffic in the local area that the expansion proposal would cause.
 - 3.12.1 Traffic and parking issues are explicitly recognised in Essex Highways "Local Highways Panels Members' Guide 12 – Parking Restrictions" which notes (page 4):

"Safety and congestion are the main concerns of both parents and residents but it is important to remember that for school gate parking concerns, this is a very difficult matter to mitigate and additional waiting restrictions are rarely an effective solution.

 - Child casualties around schools are thankfully very rare in Essex.

- The congestion slows the traffic and makes serious injury to children less likely.
- This issue is not generally experienced outside of term time and is only apparent during the beginning and end of the school day”

Since the end of the consultation period the school's leadership team has begun working on updating the travel plan and incorporating ideas which will lead to sustainable travel arrangements for the school. The plan includes initiatives such as Walk to School Week, pedestrian skills training and cycle training for pupils (e.g., Bikeability).

- 3.13 4 responses that did not fully support the proposal felt that there was insufficient information provided in the consultation document to make an informed decision and in particular how the expanding building would look.

ECC, and the school, have shared all the available information on the proposal but, at this stage, it is not possible to share final designs of the building as these have yet to be completed. There will be further opportunities for all interested parties to comment on the scheme included a pre-planning consultation prior to planning permission being submitted.

- 3.14 The remaining 2 responses that did not fully support the proposal stated that a new school, or an expansion at an alternative school would be a better option.

The forecast demand is for approximately 15 extra places per year and it would not, therefore, be feasible for a new school. The extra demand has come from additional housing in Coggeshall and expansion at an alternative school would not allow for all local children to attend St Peter's, the local school. Should these places not be provided locally then there is a strong possibility that increased car journeys will need to be made outside the local area, in order for parents to secure a preferred primary school placement.

- 3.15 Following the publication of statutory notices, as recommended in this report, there will be a 4 week period for any interested party to comment on the proposals.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Develop our County sustainably
- Share prosperity with everyone

5 Options

5.1 Option 1 – Agree to publish statutory proposals to expand St Peter's CE Primary School, from 315 places (1.5 forms of entry) to 420 places (2 forms of entry) from September 2025.

5.1.1 This proposal is part of the overall strategic response to the need for additional school places in this area of Essex across the whole of the ten year period as set out in the 10 Year Plan. The expansion of St Peter's CE Primary School will provide additional capacity, and will provide the opportunity to meet a higher number of parental preferences.

5.1.2 ECC's proposal to expand the School is intended to ensure that local children have the opportunity to access a local school and, as the need for these places is driven by demand that already exists within the town, these children will live well within walking distance of the School and a safe walking route must already exist for them to get there on foot, bicycle or scooter. However, ECC has dedicated officers who assist schools in drawing up travel plans, and this resource will be available to the School should it need to mitigate the impact of additional children travelling to the site by car.

5.1.3 Option 1 is therefore the preferred option.

5.2 Option 2 – Expand an alternative school

5.2.1 The need for additional primary school places is due, predominately, to a new housing development in Coggeshall. This new development is approximately 0.5 miles from St Peter's Primary School. The nearest alternative school would be approximately 2.5 miles away and would therefore require car journeys and/or home to school transport.

5.2.2 Accordingly, expanding an alternative school is not the recommended option.

5.3 Option 3 – Do nothing

5.3.1 The option to do nothing is not practicable. This report identifies a growing need for primary school places within this area, and Essex County Council is under a legal duty to make sure that a school place is available for each child within its administrative area that requires one.

5.3.2 Accordingly, taking no action is not the recommended option.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 There are no financial implications as this decision is only to publish statutory proposals. However, before any expansion proposal can proceed, a further

decision must be taken which would outline the financial implications for that particular scheme.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 ECC has a statutory duty to commission supply of school places. ECC is responsible for funding the 'basic need' provision of additional school places in Essex at all schools, including academies.

6.2.2 St Peter's CE Primary School is a maintained school. The regulations governing this expansion proposal are the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, which requires a local authority to publish a statutory proposal where it proposes to increase pupil numbers in a maintained school.

6.2.3 The process for publishing statutory proposals for maintained schools is set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

6.2.4 There is no prescribed 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alterations, but Department for Education guidance makes it clear that there is a strong expectation on schools and local authorities to consult interested parties in developing their proposals prior to publication, as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations.

6.2.5 Details of the representations received during the consultation period are included in the background papers. The Council is satisfied that the consultation process is sound and compliant with all procedural requirements.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability	22.03.24

In consultation with:

Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	22.03.2024
Laura Edwards on behalf of Paul Turner	