

# **Chelmsford Local Plan**

## **Additional Representations in respect of Strategic Growth Site North of South Woodham Ferrers**

### **St Marys Church of England primary School, Main Road Woodham Ferrers**

Essex County Council are currently consulting on the future of the school, with an end date of 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018. <http://suveys.essexinsight.org.uk/StMarysWoodhamFerrers>

Essex County Council's preferred option is to close the school in July 2019 and offer all the current pupils and their sibling's places in Collingwood School in South Woodham Ferrers (Chetwood & Collingwood ward). There are a number of detailed inaccuracies in the ECC report, which we are sure will be dealt with through the consultation process

With the very likely closure of the St Marys School in Woodham Ferrers in July 2019 and the pupils and siblings taking up the offer of the guaranteed places, the capacity in Collingwood will no longer exist.

South Woodham Town Council has in it's representations on the Chelmsford Local Plan in March 2018 that the plan is flawed because it is the only significant strategic site that does not have a school but only includes one on a "precautionary basis". The reasoning behind this is that Collingwood School has the site capacity to expand significantly.

The City Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (January 2018), which was issued before the proposed closure of St. Mary's School stated "Only Collingwood School has the site area to expand significantly (by 0.5fe) potentially leaving a new school as the best option to meet demand in excess of current surplus.". The City Council also predicted that the population would increase by 2,400, with 400 of these being children. The proposal to close St. Mary's School without the necessary extra school places already in place for when the new homes are completed will leave children without a school place to go to.

The Town Council in its Statement of Common Ground in paragraph 5.1 also commented about the travel time from the Strategic site to Collinwood School and the definite need for a school, this will be further compromised with additional pupils filling up the spaces at the school. Chelmsford City Councils response in The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (June 2018 update) (EB 018B) still indicates it will only seek the securement of a site for a primary school "if required".

It is still our contention that with closure of St Marys School a new school will be required as part of any development on this strategic site.

# GhA Uf mfg'7 9 'fU 5 L'Df]a Uf mGW cc`ž K ccX\ Ua `: Yff Yfg

**Consultation on a proposal to close fZW school from  
31 August 201+**

AUfaTWd201\*



Essex County Council



## **Introduction**

Essex County Council (ECC), with the Governing Body (IEB) of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and the Church of England Diocese of Chelmsford, is considering the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School in Woodham Ferrers. This is in response to the persistently low number of pupils who attend the school and the significant financial problem this presents. Every indication is that the number of pupils attending the school will drop even further over the coming years. The Local Authority has a duty to secure excellent education for all children; despite best efforts to find robust solutions, it is unable to be confident that this school can become secure enough to provide this.

The County Council is therefore seeking the views of all interested parties on a proposal to close St Mary's CE Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019.

Please take the time to read this document and attend one of the meetings that has been arranged to discuss the proposal further, and ask any questions that you might have. Details of meetings can be found on page 12. This document provides details of the proposal, other options that have been considered, and how you can make your views known.

At this stage ECC along with the governing body (IEB) and The Diocese of Chelmsford has explored a number of options to maintain the school, but none appear to be feasible. If the school is to be closed a legal process needs to be followed which is explained in the document. This consultation is the first step of that process.

The final date for receipt of responses to this consultation is Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Clare Kershaw – Director for Education

## **Summary**

St Mary's CE Primary School is a small Church of England school located in Woodham Ferrers with a published admission number (PAN) of 14 and a capacity for 105 pupils. It serves the local rural community, as well as a number of pupils who live up to 8 miles away. Map 1 on page 14 shows where pupils currently attending the school live.

The number of pupils attending St Mary's CE Primary School (number on roll) has been low for some time. Forecasts indicate that the number on roll at the school will decline further over the coming years (see table 2 on page 13)

Because of the sustained low numbers of pupils at the school (which is not forecast to increase), financial pressures have been building at the school which make it unsustainable (see page 4 for more information) and suggest the school needs to close. In addition, there are enough school places in the surrounding schools to accommodate all of the pupils currently on roll.

The governing body (IEB) of the school has been in discussion with Essex County Council and the Diocese of Chelmsford about the declining number of primary aged children residing in the area and the predicted falling roll. Together they have been exploring a range of ways that the school could secure its future and continue to provide a high quality of education for its pupils.

The options explored include federating with another school, joining an academy trust, reducing the intake of the school, expanding the school, and establishing Early Years provision. More detail on these options can be found on page 5.

Unfortunately, none of these options explored to sustain the school are feasible, so closure of the school seems the only viable option and is now being consulted on. Details of the proposed closure and information about the process can be found from page 6 onwards.

## **St Mary's CE Primary School**

St Mary's CE Primary School aims to provide an environment which is caring and stimulating in which each child is challenged to achieve his or her full potential academically, socially and spiritually.

To achieve these aims it is critical that the school is able to fund and deliver a full range of educational and extra-curricular activities. Schools are funded on a county wide formula which is based on the number of pupils attending the school as well as

a lump sum. Low and falling numbers of pupils attending a school result in less funding available, and difficulty in providing the full range of services needed.

In June 2017, the Local Authority carried a review of the school performance and determined that at that time the standards and effectiveness at the school placed it at risk of an inadequate Ofsted judgement if inspected. An Interim Executive Board (IEB) was established to replace the governing body and this board provides governance to the school. New leadership capacity from a local federation of schools was also commissioned to work with the IEB and staff to address the concerns outlined by the review.

Since appointed to the school, the IEB and leaders have invested significant time, effort and determination to improve the performance across the school and to increase the roll.

The school was inspected on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11th of January 2018. Ofsted confirmed that the new leaders' work to raise standards was leading to rapid improvements. While not yet good, the school was deemed to be quickly recovering from the decline in its effectiveness. The IEB had a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and as a result, the IEB and leaders were deemed to be working well together and were making significant improvements to the school. The school was therefore judged to be 'Requiring Improvement' by Ofsted.

Despite the improvements found by Ofsted, the number of pupils attending St Mary's CE Primary School (number on roll) remains low. Forecasts indicate that the number on roll at the school will decline further over the coming years (see table 2 on page 13).

There remain very low numbers of pre-school and primary age children residing in the local area around St Mary's CE Primary School (see table 1 on page 13). Currently there are only 49 children attending the school compared to a capacity of 105.

The low take up of school places and the associated financial pressures led the governing body (IEB) of the school in discussion with Essex County Council and the Diocese to explore a range of ways that the school could secure its future financially, and continue to provide a high quality of education for its pupils. These options are described in the next section.

## **Options Explored**

### ***Federation or joining a Multi Academy Trust***

A federation is a group of maintained schools under one governing body. A multi academy trust has one board of directors responsible for all schools in the trust. In either example the schools leadership would be taken on by a new organisation. Cost savings come through the sharing of services, and in the case of small schools, usually the loss of a full-time headteacher, in favour of an executive headteacher who manages more than one school. These options were not found to be sustainable, due to the small size of St Mary's CE Primary School and the long-term cost pressures that the school would place on a federation or academy trust.

### ***Reducing intake***

One way to improve the financing of the school is to ensure that classes are as close to full as possible (at 30 pupils per class), which can save money on teaching staff. A smaller admission number would mean the school could plan for fewer pupils and therefore operate fewer classes with fewer staff while still accommodating the low number of pupils on roll. This option was assessed, and would not secure the school financially. This is because any school has a level of fixed costs that need to be met, and these costs would not have decreased significantly by reducing the intake.

### ***Expanding the school***

Although this may seem counterintuitive, sometimes investment into a school will attract pupils. In this case, because the local population is so low, and there is surplus capacity in other nearby schools, there was no evidence to suggest that investment in an expansion would result in a larger number on roll at the school.

ECC is aware of plans for new housing in the area. New housing, and the number of children that will move into new housing, is included in ECC's school place forecasts and taken into account when considering the number of school places required.

### ***Establishing Early Years provision***

Often a nursery or pre-school on site increases the number of pupils a school will admit into Reception. Establishing an Early Years setting is not viable due to a lack of demand. The South Woodham-Elmwood and Woodville Ward that the school is located in currently has 15 providers of Early Years and Childcare places. This figure includes 10 Childminders, 1 Day Nursery and 4 preschools. Of those that responded to the latest sufficiency data, (summer term 2017) all provider types declared vacancies for Early Years Places (38 within the ward).

## School Places and the proposal to close St Mary's CE Primary School

ECC has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for children living in the county; in order to do this ECC monitors GP registrations, new housing developments and patterns of parental preference. This information is used to predict pupil numbers and to ensure there are sufficient school places across the county.

A proposal to close St Mary's CE Primary School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 has been put forward, considering the low and falling number of pupils attending the school and the financial implications for the school, the need to continue to provide a high quality education for pupils currently on roll and the availability of places at other local schools.

The process to close a school involves 5 steps:

- **Consultation** on the proposal to close the school
- **Publication** of a statutory notice and proposal to close the school.
- **Representation** period for further responses to the formal proposal.
- **Decision** to be taken following the representation period
- **Implementation** if the decision is taken to close the school.

More information on the process can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

The timeline for this process in relation to the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School can be found on page 12.

The next section contains information on the implications for current and prospective pupils and parents of St Mary's CE Primary School, should a decision be taken to close the school on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019.

## How the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School would be managed

The following section contains answers to questions that parents may have about accessing a school place for their child if the decision is taken to close St Mary's CE Primary School. There is also information on how to make your views on the proposal known, and the timeline that will be followed for the decision making process.



### ***What would happen to the children currently attending St Mary's CE Primary School?***

If the decision is taken to close the school, a place at Collingwood Primary School will be made available for any child currently attending St Mary's CE Primary School in years Reception to Year 5 should they wish to take it up. Parents will need to submit an application, directly to Collingwood Primary School, for their child to attend this school from September 2019.

For any parents wanting a place at a school other than Collingwood Primary School, an application can be made through the normal mid-year admissions process for an alternative school for September 2019. Applications would need to be made to the County Council from 1 May 2019 and this would then be considered in line with the particular school's published admissions criteria and the school's current number on roll in the relevant year group.

These applications will be coordinated by ECC to ensure each application is treated in the same way.

Information about applying for an alternative school place is available on the website [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions). The School Admissions team can be contacted by telephone on 0345 603 2200.

### ***A place at Collingwood Primary School***

Collingwood Primary School is a *Good* school (as confirmed by the most recent Ofsted inspection) in South Woodham Ferrers. Should the decision be taken to close St Mary's CE Primary School, Collingwood Primary will be able to welcome new children and families from St Mary's CE Primary School who choose to take up a place, and will be supported by ECC to do so.

If the decision is taken to close the school, the headteacher at Collingwood Primary School will be able to show parents and children around the school and discuss the needs of pupils who may take up a place there. Information about Collingwood Primary School can be found at [www.collingwood.essex.sch.uk](http://www.collingwood.essex.sch.uk).

### ***Do I have to send my child to Collingwood Primary School?***

A number of pupils attend the school from some distance away, and so other schools local to their home address may be preferable than a place at Collingwood Primary School. As described above, your application for other schools will be considered in line with the schools published admissions criteria. Map 2 on page 15 shows other local schools.

### ***What if I wish my child to continue at a Church of England school?***

There are a number of Church of England schools in the district: Trinity St Mary, South Woodham Ferrers (2.2 miles); East Hanningfield (3.5); Danbury (4); Woodham Walter (5.8); West Hanningfield (6.1); Rawreth (6.6); Latchingdon (7.5); Downham (9) and Stock (9.3).

It is recognised that, for some parents, a place at a church school is something they value for their child. Parents are entitled to apply for other church schools in the normal way and their application would be considered under the admission arrangements for the relevant school(s). The consultation on the future of St Mary's CE Primary School and any decision in relation to this would not disadvantage any application for any other church school.

### ***My child is in year 6, how will this affect them?***

If the proposal to close St Mary's CE Primary School goes ahead it will close at the end of the summer term 2019. Children currently in year 6 will be unaffected by the proposal. Applications being made for secondary school places will not be affected by this proposal.

### ***My child has special educational needs (SEND), what will I need to do?***

The Mid Essex SEND Team will make arrangements to meet all parents of children with special educational needs in the first half of the spring term to discuss the arrangements for their future education and to plan future options for new schools, should a decision be taken to close St Mary's CE Primary School. Reviews for children with an Education Health Care Plan and SEN Support will be arranged to ensure that potential transitions can be planned effectively.

Mid Essex officers will work in partnership with new schools to ensure that children's learning needs continue to be met. Consideration will be given to the schools SEN information report in terms of curriculum, range of interventions and staff expertise in order to achieve children's planned outcomes.

The Specialist Teacher Team will support all pupils on their caseload in any their new schools. If a decision is taken to close St Mary's CE Primary School, we will work with other local schools to ensure that the distance that pupils will need to travel is minimised and that support will be in place as they move. Where parents have concerns and wish to receive further advice we will arrange for them to be supported by our SENDIASS team.

### ***Would free transport be made available to alternative schools?***

Free transport will be made available from St Mary's CE Primary School to Collingwood Primary School in the mornings and returning to the St Mary's CE Primary School in the afternoon for all pupils currently attending St Mary's CE Primary School who, following any closure decision, transfer to Collingwood Primary School with effect from September 2019.

Younger siblings of those current pupils, who transfer from St Mary's CE Primary School, would also be able to access free transport as described above, for the duration that the child currently at St Mary's CE Primary School remains at Collingwood Primary School.

Any application for transport to an alternative school will be considered in line with ECC's current home to school transport policy and transport would only be provided if the policy criteria are met.

### ***Applications for Reception for September 2019***

Applications for St Mary's CE Primary School for September 2019 can be made through ECC's normal admissions procedure via [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions) from 12 November 2018. The closing date is 15 January 2019.

If a final decision is taken to close the school from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 the preference for St Mary's CE Primary School will be removed. The other preferences would be considered as normal. Any parent wanting to replace the St Mary's CE Primary School preference with a different school will be able to do so.

Full details of the admissions process for Reception admission for September 2019 are available on the website [www.essex.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions).

### ***How can you make your views known?***

A series of meetings has been arranged, including a public meeting, to provide an opportunity for parents, staff, pupils and members of the local community to ask questions and express their views on the proposal outlined in this document. Parents and staff will receive information on these meetings directly.

At this stage no decision has been made, and all the views received, either at the meetings or separately in writing, will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

While this is a consultation on a proposal to close the school, other options have been considered, and your views and opinion on other potential options to secure the future of the school are welcome.

The following public meeting has been arranged for any who wish to attend:

Time and Date: Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October at 7:00pm  
Location: St Mary's CE Primary School, Main Road,  
Woodham Ferrers, CM3 8RJ

Separate meetings have also been arranged for staff and parents.

We will also be seeking the views of other interested parties, such as local pre-schools, local councils and Trades Unions.

### ***Your Comments***

You are invited to respond to this consultation using the following electronic survey form:

<http://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/StMarysWoodhamFerrers>

Alternatively, you may wish to write to or email us with your comments to the addresses given below by Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

**Mark Pincombe – School Organisation Officer**

**Essex County Council  
County Hall – E2  
Market Road  
Chelmsford  
CM1 1QH**

[school.organisation@essex.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@essex.gov.uk)

You are also welcome to drop any letters into the school by midday on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Letters should be in a sealed envelope addressed to Mark Pincombe (as above). The school will forward these to County Hall.

All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected to be included in the analysis of feedback received. Essex County Council (ECC) handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your answers to this consultation will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposed expansions and not for any other purpose. We will not give information about you to anyone outside ECC.

If you would like to discuss the proposal you can call Mark Pincombe – School Organisation Officer on 03330 131155. You can also contact the Chair of the governing body (IEB), Heather Faulkner at [IEB@st-marys-woodham.essex.sch.uk](mailto:IEB@st-marys-woodham.essex.sch.uk). They will either be able to discuss your particular matters directly, or make sure you can speak to the most appropriate person to support you.

The information contained in this document can be made available in alternative formats:

large print, Braille, audio tape or disk and can be translated on request.

### ***What happens next?***

At the end of this consultation period a decision will be made by Cllr Ray Gooding – Cabinet Member for Education at ECC, after discussing with the Governing Body (IEB) and the Diocese of Chelmsford, on whether ECC still believe that this proposal should proceed. If the answer is “yes”, then a Statutory Notice will be published in the local press and will be displayed at the main entrance to the school.

This statutory representation period provides the final opportunity for people and organisations to comment on, or submit an objection to, the proposal.

At the end of the period any comments on or objections to the proposal will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Education along with the Governing Body (IEB) and the Diocese of Chelmsford, before a final decision is made by ECCs Cabinet on whether or not to approve the proposed closure.

## Timeline

The consultation period will run from Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October to Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November. Below is the estimated timeline for the decision process:

Date	Activity
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2018	Consultation commences – consultation document can be viewed: <a href="http://essex.gov.uk/schoolconsultations">http://essex.gov.uk/schoolconsultations</a>
Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2018	Public meeting for parents, carers, staff and the local community to be held at 7:00pm at St Mary's CE Primary School, Main Road, Woodham Ferrers, CM3 8RJ
Other meetings will also be held during the consultation, specifically for staff and for parents, and they will receive information about these meetings directly	
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	End of consultation period
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	Decision by Essex County Council on whether to publish a Statutory Notice and proposals to close the school.
*Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	Publication of Statutory Notice and proposals (if decision above is to proceed with the closure process) and start of formal representation period.
*Friday 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	End of statutory period for representations and final date for responses to this proposal.
*Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	Decision taken by Essex County Council on closure proposal
*31 <sup>st</sup> August 2019	St Mary's CE Primary School closes

\* These stages will apply only if the proposal is approved by the County Council.

## Data

Table 1

The table below shows the number of pre-school and primary school age children living within 1 mile of St Mary's CE Primary School.

	<b>Age Year 2018/2019</b>	<b>Based Group</b>	<b>Number of children within 1 mile*</b>
Pre-School Age	-3		3
	-2		5
	-1		3
Primary School Age	Reception		10
	Year 1		4
	Year 2		4
	Year 3		6
	Year 4		3
	Year 5		2
	Year 6		6
	<b>Average</b>		<b>5</b>

\*Based on GP Registration data.

Table 2

The table below shows both the historic number on roll as well as the predicted number on roll for St Mary's CE Primary School.

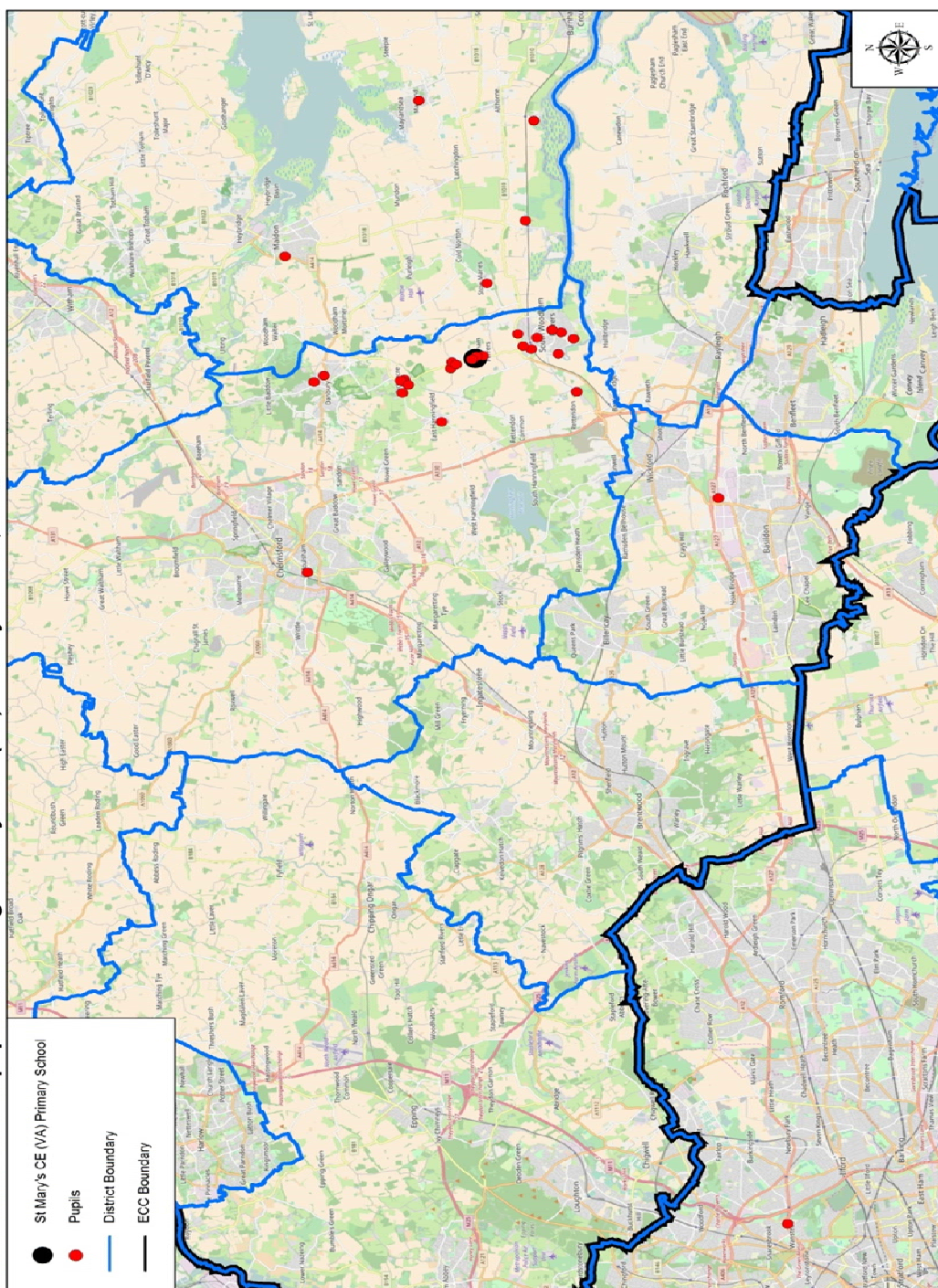
	Historical Number on Roll*			Predicted Number on Roll				
Academic Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number on Roll	70	51	62	49	40	43	47	46

\*Number on roll in October of that academic year



# Map 1

## Home addresses of pupils attending St Mary's CE (VA) Primary School, Woodham Ferrers



0 1 2 4 6 8 10  
Miles  
Scale: 1:140,000 @ A3

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey Material with the permission of Ordnance Survey.  
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018  
Contains Royal Mail data © Royal Mail Copyright and database right 2018  
Essex County Council: Licence No. 100015602, School Organisation and Place Planning

Prepared by: Ken Donald  
Date: 08 October 2018  
Path: R:\STRATEGY TEAM\FOLDER>Data Request and  
F of Info Act2018 Data Requests\3331\_Y1\_ St Mary's  
Woodham Ferrers\GIS\St Mary's Woodham Ferrers.mxd





Map 2

