

INF004

Chelmsford City Council Housing Scenario Test – Primary and Secondary Education December 2024

Background

Essex County Council's (ECC) School Organisation team has been working with Chelmsford City Council (CCC) to assist in the preparation of the Review of the Local Plan to ensure sufficient school places are provided, arising from new development, over the Plan period. This Scenario Test is based on CCC's Pre-Submission Local Plan and has been carried out in accordance with ECC's [Local and Neighbourhood Planners Guide to School Organisation \(2020\)](#).

The scenario provided by Chelmsford City Council includes a total of 21,333 homes¹ of which around 70% were qualifying houses and 11% were qualifying flats. The remaining homes were discounted as unlikely to house children. The sites were matched to their 'nearest' schools using ArcGIS. Phasing information was not used, as this test considers the full impact of growth by the end of the emerging Local Plan period of 2041. However, the full capacity of both Chelmsford Garden Community (6,250 homes) and East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) (4,500 homes) have been tested to identify their full requirements. Further assessment will be undertaken to support individual planning applications once the detailed housing mix has been determined by the developer.

Assessment

In the text below, reference is made to Forms of Entry (FE) i.e. the number of classes of thirty pupils in each year group. A two FE primary school would thereby have space for 420 pupils in total (2 classes x 30 pupils x 7 year groups) and a six FE secondary school with no sixth form would have space for 900 pupils in total (6 classes x 30 pupils x 5 year groups).

The scenario has been assessed using ECC's standard per dwelling pupil product factors as set out in the [Local and Neighbourhood Planners Guide to School Organisation \(2020\)](#).

Age Range	Qualifying House	Qualifying Flat
Primary	0.3	0.15
Secondary	0.2	0.1

It should be noted that these factors are based on average demand. Starting with younger cohorts, actual numbers generally peak at higher levels in the period shortly after new homes are first occupied. 2.1ha sites are requested for new primary schools as, based on [DfE Building Bulletin 103](#), this is ideal for a 2FE primary with commensurate Early Years & Childcare provision (EY&C) but also provides space for the school to temporarily expand by a form of entry during 'bulge' periods.

¹ Taken from the April 2024 Housing Site Schedule, but excluding student and older persons units, and any completions since that date to avoid double counting.

Analysis is by geographical ‘school planning groups’ that are agreed with the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the annual School Capacity Survey (SCAP). Each site in the scenario test has been matched to its closest primary and secondary school. Minor adjustments are made where appropriate to aid analysis and reflect constraints. The schools in each planning group are listed in ECC’s [Ten Year Plan \(2024-2033\)](#): ‘Meeting the demand for mainstream school places in Essex’.

The pupil Numbers on Roll (NOR) used are from the October 2024 School Census. The pupil forecasts were produced in May 2024 but use the January 2024 Census data. These forecasts exclude pupils from new housing so as not to double count. School capacity is based on the Published Admission Numbers for September 2025 i.e. the number of places each school is expected to offer for the 2025/26 academic year in Reception (primary) or Year 7 (secondary).

The following measures have then been applied to assess the likely surplus / deficit in provision:

1. How much space do we have / need based on current numbers on roll plus the new housing but retaining 5%* of the current capacity as surplus?
2. What is the surplus / deficit including all the housing at the highest point of underlying demand shown in the forecasts (no surplus capacity retained)?

** Figure recommended by the Audit Commission.*

These measures help identify ‘worst case’ and provide a robust benchmark against which the soundness of a Local Plan, in school place planning terms, can be assessed. Birth rates have been falling in recent years and, thereby, current NOR and peak forecasts may overstate demand if fertility rates do not return to previous levels. On this basis, the following recommendations may not address the higher potential demand indicated in every area.

Scenario test results

Primary

Group	Pupils from new housing (FE)	Published Admission Number (2025)	Demand Before Housing		Surplus Places After Housing	
			Oct 2024 YrR NOR	Peak YrR Size from 2025/6 (2024 Forecasts)	Using NOR but keeping 5% of capacity unfilled	Based on Peak Demand
Chelmsford Primary A: North (Walthams)	5.2	155	134	125	-4.8	-4.2
Chelmsford Primary B: City northwest (Melbourne)	1.2	240	192	194	-0.0	0.3
Chelmsford Primary C: City northeast (Springfield)	6.4	480	442	420	-6.0	-4.4
Chelmsford Primary D: West (Writtle)	0.1	85	80	80	-0.0	0.1
Chelmsford Primary E: City centre	2.1	435	377	435	-0.9	-2.1
Chelmsford Primary F: East (Danbury)	6.0	104	81	99	-5.4	-5.8
Chelmsford Primary G: City south (Baddow)	0.3	282	216	232	1.4	1.4
Chelmsford Primary H: South (Rettendon)	0.1	65	51	41	0.3	0.7
Chelmsford Primary I: Southeast (Woodham Ferrers)	1.6	239	186	175	-0.2	0.6

Negative figures in the final two columns suggest a potential deficit in provision.

Chelmsford Primary A: North (Walthams)

These figures include the land allocated in the adopted Local Plan at Great Leighs (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 7a) and parts of the Chelmsford Garden Community (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 6) (2,750 homes in Zones 1 & 3). Both of these developments include 2.1ha of land for new primary schools, and Great Waltham Primary potentially has space for a minor expansion project if required. The above figures for this group should be read in

conjunction with Group C, which is matched to Zone 2 of the Garden Community and offers further primary school provision which will be accessible to the other zones.

Chelmsford Primary B: City northwest (Melbourne)

The largest development in this area is West Chelmsford (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 2). Land for a new 2.1 ha primary school site is allocated in the adopted Local Plan. If required, the school could play a role in meeting need from adjoining groups, including the Town Centre, where expansion options are limited or land for new schools is unavailable.

Chelmsford Primary C: City northeast (Springfield)

The Beaulieu Park development and the largest part of the Chelmsford Garden Community (Zone 2) (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 6) are included in these figures. Three 2.1ha primary school sites, including the potential all-through school, are included in the Garden Community masterplan for this zone. The unfilled capacity indicated above will potentially be needed by Zones 1 and 3, which were matched to Group A.

Chelmsford Primary D: West (Writtle)

There is sufficient capacity in this area for the proposed level of development.

Chelmsford Primary E: City centre

A significant amount of development is proposed within the City centre, but a high proportion will be flatted and a lower pupil product per dwelling can therefore be anticipated. Moulsham Infant & Junior Schools have accommodation to take an additional form of entry and desk top feasibility work suggests Meadgate Primary can be expanded by 1FE.

Chelmsford Primary F: East (Danbury)

The potential deficit indicated is due to the inclusion of the proposed East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) (Site SGS 16a in the Pre-Submission Local Plan) in this group. Three new primary school sites (2.1ha each) will need to be allocated. One may form part of an all-through school.

Chelmsford Primary G: City south (Baddow)

There is sufficient capacity in this area for the proposed level of development.

Chelmsford Primary H: South (Rettendon)

There is sufficient capacity in this area for the proposed level of development.

Chelmsford Primary I: Southeast (Woodham Ferrers)

Land North of South Woodham Ferrers (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 10) development will generate significant demand for places, but this is forecast to be balance by falling numbers in the base population. Should a new school be required, land has been allocated.

Basildon Primary A: Northwest (Billericay)

In addition to the demand shown in the above table, there are a small number of sites, mainly around Stock and Downham, which are closest to schools in the Basildon Borough. They represent additional demand for only around one place per year group.

Secondary

Chelmsford Secondary Group:

Beaulieu Park, Boswells; Chelmer Valley; Chelmsford County High; Great Baddow; King Edward VI; Hylands; Moulsham; Sandon & St John Payne.

The level of development within this group equates to 18.9FE. Based on the first measure, most of this would require additional capacity. However, as alluded to above, birth rates have been falling. If this trend is sustained the second measure, which suggests 18.2FE extra capacity is needed, may need to be adjusted downwards. In terms of extra places, a new all-through school on the Chelmsford Garden Community (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 6) is expected to deliver 8FE of secondary capacity. Similar provision is anticipated for the proposed East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammond Farm) (Site SGS 16a in the Pre-Submission Local Plan). The Beaulieu Park school also has capacity for 2FE more secondary pupils when this is required to meet the needs of that partially completed development. There is some scope for expansion at other schools in the group if required.

William De Ferrers, South Woodham Ferrers.

This school, although in the Chelmsford City area, is grouped with Ormiston Rivers Academy in Burnham-on-Crouch (Maldon District). The extra demand generated by development is estimated at 1.5FE, with both measures suggesting new capacity will be needed for all the homes. Both schools have limited expansion potential, but the level of development proposed is deemed manageable. Coordination with Maldon District Council will be required and higher than usual developer contributions may be needed to deliver acceptable outcomes.

Notley (Braintree).

The housing allocations around Great Leighs in Chelmsford's adopted Local Plan, and around Notley in Braintree's adopted Local Plan, will need to be accommodated at this school. Further pressure could be placed on Notley if children from the Chelmsford Garden Community (Adopted Plan Policy SGS 6) gain admission to Chelmer Valley rather than children close to the Braintree border. There is sufficient land for expansion but there is a need to establish safe direct walking and cycling routes to avoid transport costs.

Other Cross border schools:

Mayflower (Billericay); Beauchamps (Wickford) and Anglo European (Ingatestone)

There are a few small developments proposed which are closest to one of the above schools. The numbers are not considered to be significant. The most impacted school is Beauchamps, which could need to accommodate less than three extra pupils per year.

Education Land Allocations

To meet the estimated needs arising from the scenario tested, it is recommended that the following education land would be required to be provided on the following sites in the Local Plan.

Site	Education Land
SGS7a - Great Leighs (Land at Moulsham Hall)	2.1ha for primary / EY&C
SGS6 - Chelmsford Garden Community**	3 X 2.1ha for primary / EY&C sites 1 x 2.4 ha for primary / EY&C and SEND site 1 X 10.05ha for secondary school*
SGS2 - West Chelmsford	2.1ha for primary / EY&C
SGS16a - East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm)***	3 X 2.1ha primary school / EY&C sites 1 X 10.1ha for secondary school*
SGS10 - Land North of South Woodham Ferrers	2.1ha for primary / EY&C

* Co-located with primary school land to allow all-through school option

** Chelmsford Garden Community has been tested with its full allocation, including that to be delivered beyond the plan period of 2041.

*** East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) has been tested with its full allocation, including that to be delivered beyond the plan period of 2041.

Key Points

- The impact of the development set out in the scenario, on mainstream statutory age education, can be mitigated through the allocation of the land for school use (set out above) and planning obligations (set out the ECC [Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions \(Revised 2024\)](#)).
- Further assessment will be undertaken to support individual planning applications once the detailed housing mix has been determined by the developer.
- Existing land for education use set out in extant s106 agreements should also be formally allocated for education & childcare use, to ensure the options relied upon in the above comments are retained in the event of any alternative permissions being sought.

Prepared by Essex County Council on behalf of Chelmsford City Council
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