

# Education Topic Paper

## Supporting the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan



# South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041

## OCC Education Topic Paper March 2025

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## Executive Summary

The county council has statutory duties to ensure sufficient school and early education/childcare places.

This topic paper focuses on the actions which would be needed to meet the education requirements resulting from the housing allocations contained in the submitted South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041, including both the expanded / amended housing allocations contained in this Plan and sites in the adopted local plans which are reallocated in the Joint Local Plan. It encompasses primary and secondary education, and nursery education for children expected to qualify for the funded childcare and early education entitlement under current government policy. This paper also includes Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), where there is rapidly growing need for provision . It does not include Further or Higher Education, nor (in any depth) pre-school education or childcare provided beyond the funded entitlement.

Primary school planning is largely on a site-by site basis, to ensure sufficient school capacity is provided within each of the large strategic sites. In total, the submitted Joint Local Plan (both amended and reallocated sites) would require up to nine new primary schools, all including nursery provision, in addition to those already planned for on / needed by housing sites that already have planning permission (those sites listed within Policy HOU2).

Secondary school capacity needs to be planned more strategically, as a secondary school would serve more than one site, and in some cases would be relevant for more than one district. To meet the needs resulting from the submitted Joint Local Plan (both amended and reallocated sites) three new secondary schools are required within South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, in addition to the all-through St John's Academy which opened on Grove Airfield in 2023, and the planned new secondary school in Didcot, both of which were required as a result of previous Local Plan allocations.

Given the scale of development proposed, in the context of a rising need for special education, at least three new special schools across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse will also be required. In addition, special needs Resource Bases/Units would be included in all new mainstream schools, except where the need is already met locally.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Relevant Government guidance

This topic paper is informed by the relevant government guidance, in particular:

- [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (last updated December 2024)
- [Securing developer contributions for education](#) (last updated August 2023)
- [Opening and closing maintained schools](#) (last updated October 2024)
- [Establishing a new academy](#) (last updated May 2024)
- [Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement](#) (last updated October 2024)
- [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools](#) (last updated October 2024)

All such guidance is subject to periodic review, and future school planning decisions will be informed by the latest available guidance at that time.

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (paragraph 100) makes clear that “It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.”

*Securing developer contributions for education* (paragraph 62) confirms the expectation that, “as far as possible (and often in relation to primary schools only), new settlements and urban extensions large enough to require a new school should be expected to meet their full education requirement. Where an onsite school is required, it should be large enough to meet the need generated by the development, based on standard class sizes and forms of entry. Paragraph 63 goes on to make clear that “The capacity of existing primary schools beyond reasonable and safe walking distance does not need to be considered when calculating developer contributions for permanent onsite schools in new settlements and urban extensions. This promotes sustainable and healthy travel patterns for young people, while helping housing developments mitigate their impact on the environment by reducing the need for pupils to travel by private car or school transport.”

Paragraphs 64-66 provide further detail about the planning of new on-site schools, including that planning policies and planning obligations should require a suitable school site to be made available at the appropriate time. If early school delivery is required, the school site must be identified and agreed at an early stage, giving consideration to its accessibility and condition at the point of transfer.

In some circumstances, new schools may open to serve a development and for some intake years, be below their full capacity while the development is still populating. Other developments should not rely on this temporary surplus capacity to mitigate their own impact. However, there may be some instances where circumstances have changed



for the original development, such as a redesign of later phases which will give rise to fewer pupils, that could make capacity available for other developments. Paragraphs 71 and 15 make clear that local authorities may decide to support the delivery of strategic development at pace by forward-funding school provision, and secure developer contributions to recoup the monies spent, including interest, fees, and expenses as well as the principal sum spent.

*Opening and closing maintained schools* sets out the processes through which new schools can be opened. In the circumstances discussed here, the usual route would be the “free school presumption”, whereby section 6A of Education and Inspections Act 2006 places the local authority under a duty to seek proposals to establish an academy (free school). The local authority is responsible for providing the site for the new school and meeting all associated capital and pre-/post-opening revenue costs. All new free school presumption proposals require the Department for Education (DfE) Regional Director’s approval (on behalf of the Secretary of State) as it is the Secretary of State who will enter into a funding agreement with the academy trust/sponsor. Further detail of this process is set out in *Establishing a new academy*. Please note however that the *Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2025* proposes changes to the process for opening new schools. This bill is currently at the report stage in the House of Commons (February 2025).

*Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement* sets out the processes through which existing academies can make changes such as expansion, moving sites, or moving onto split sites. The relevant Trust needs to submit a business case to the DfE Regional Director, who is the decision-maker on behalf of the Secretary of State. The equivalent guidance for non-academy school is *Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools*.

## 1.2 School planning roles and responsibilities

Education authorities (in this case Oxfordshire County Council) have statutory duties to:

- Ensure sufficient school places (*Education Act 1996 Section 14*).
- Increase opportunities for parental choice (Section 2 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, which inserts sub-section 3A into S14 of the *Education Act 1996*).
- Comply with any preference expressed by parents provided compliance with the preference would not prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources (*School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Section 86*).
- Ensure fair access to educational opportunity (Section 1 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* inserts sub-section 1(b) into S13 of the *Education Act 1996*).

Local Authorities (OCC) are also required to secure sufficient early years and childcare provision (Childcare Act 2016; Childcare Act 2006; Children and Families Act 2014; The Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2014; The Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Amendment) Regulations 2016; The Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016)

- **Sufficient childcare** means securing the right type and volume of provision, so

far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (up to 18 for a disabled child).

- **Sufficient early years provision** means families being able to access their free entitlement for early years provision, under eligibility criteria as set out in government guidance *Early education and childcare*, most recently updated January 2024.

Under the current guidance, the entitlement to funded childcare and early years education applies to:

- Disadvantaged 2-year-olds: 570 hours a year, over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year;
- All 3- and 4-year-olds (universal entitlement): 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year;
- Working Parent entitlement: increased entitlement of 30 hours per week for children from the age of 9 months (from September 2025) subject to eligibility requirements.

The *Children and Families Act 2014*, along with associated statutory guidance (*SEND Code of Practice 2015*) and other legislation, sets out the county council's duties towards children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. In addition, schools and local authorities have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, originally under *the Disability Discrimination Act 1995* and more recently under the *Equality Act 2010*.

The government guidance *Securing developer contributions for education* makes clear that the DfE expects local authorities responsible for Education and Planning to seek developer contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from housing development. This includes the assumption that both land and funding for construction will be provided for new schools planned within housing developments.

Many Oxfordshire schools, including all secondary schools in this area, are academies, independent of the county council. Accountability for the academies lies with an academy trust, which is often responsible for several schools which may be local or spread over a wide area. Any significant changes (including expansion) need to be approved by the DfE Regional Director on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

### 1.3 Current education provision serving SODC and VOWH

Oxfordshire's school planning is set out in its Pupil Place Plan, most recently updated January 2024, which is available online:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/planning-enough-school-places>.

Detailed information about planning for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) provision is set out in the Oxfordshire SEND Sufficiency Delivery Strategy, most recently updated March 2023, which is available online:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/planning-enough-school-places>.

The Council also publishes an annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which is available at:

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/childcare-sufficiency-market-assessment](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/childcare-sufficiency-market-assessment).

These documents provide more detail on the issues covered in this topic paper.

The county's schools are divided into school planning areas, based on secondary schools and their feeder primary schools.

Within SODC and VOWH lie all or some of the following school planning areas:

- Abingdon
- Cumnor
- Didcot
- Henley
- Sonning Common
- Thame
- Wallingford
- Wantage
- Watlington
- Wheatley
- Woodcote

Figure 1: school planning areas in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.



In some cases, particularly for secondary or special needs education, there will be inter-relationships between SODC/VOWH and other districts. Within the county this applies to West Oxfordshire, Oxford City and Cherwell, but there is also some cross-boundary movement of pupils in and out of Oxfordshire. Overall, the net impact of movement in and out of the county is relatively minor, but it can be locally significant for some schools.

## 1.4 Housing and population growth to be served

The large-scale allocated sites in the Joint Local Plan are:

AS1: Land at Berinsfield Garden Village	1,700 new homes
AS2: Land Adjacent to Culham Campus	3,500 new homes
AS3: Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford	3,000 new homes
AS4: Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford	1,800 new homes
AS5: Land at Bayswater Brook, Edge of Oxford	1,450 new homes*
AS8: North West of Grove, Grove	624 new homes**
AS9: North West of Valley Park, Didcot	800 new homes
AS10: Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, Shippon	2,750 new homes

\* The stated policy dwelling number for Bayswater Brook is 1,100, but this site has received a resolution to grant for 1,450 C3 dwellings plus 120 units of assisted living.

\*\* The stated policy number for North West of Grove is approximately 600, but the trajectory used by the district council totals 624 dwellings as this aligns with the live planning application for this site (P20/V3113/O).

In each case, dwelling numbers are approximate and exclude extra care and pitches for gypsies and travelers.

Policies AS6 (Rich's Sidings and Broadway, Didcot – 100 homes), AS7 (Didcot Gateway – 200 Homes), AS16 (Vauxhall Barracks, Didcot – 300 homes) are not covered in this topic paper, as they are below the scale at which considerations of new schools are required. However, they would add to the cumulative impact of growth in the Didcot area, and their pupil generation would be taken into account in local school planning.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (as revised by the district councils post-submission) supporting the Joint Local Plan sets out the site allocations and trajectories shown in Figure 2 below, and these trajectories have informed the analysis in the topic paper

**Figure 2: Joint Local Plan strategic site trajectories**

Site Name	Total allocation	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39	2039/40	2040/41	Total to 2041	Beyond 2041
Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (Policy AS1)	1700					78	157	157	157	157	157	157	157	157	157	1,491	209
Land adjacent Culham Campus (Policy AS2)	3500				50	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	1,550	1,950
Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village (Policy AS10)	2750					100	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	1,450	1,300
	7950	0	0	0	50	328	457	457	457	457	457	457	457	457	457	4491	3459
Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS3)	3000					100	250	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	2,750	250
Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS4)	1800				60	90	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	1,230	570
Land at Bayswater Brook, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS5)	1450	150	200	200	153	247	200	200	100							1450	0
	6250	150	200	200	213	437	570	620	520	420	420	420	420	420	420	5430	820
North West of Grove, Grove (Policy AS8)	624			20	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	570	54
North West of Valley Park, Didcot (Policy AS9)	800					60	120	120	120	120	120	120	20			800	0

Where sites are shown as incomplete by 2040/41, for the purpose of pupil generation modelling continued delivery in line with that shown up to 2040/41 has been assumed.

In addition, the Joint Local Plan, Policy HOU2, identifies the sites shown in Figure 3 below as carried over from the previous Local Plans, and already having planning permission, and



these provide the context for planning school provision for the Joint Local Plan allocations.

### Figure 3: Joint Local Plan sites carried over from previous Local Plans

Source: Page 113 of Joint Local Plan 2041 (Publication Version)

- 3) The following sites with planning permission, allocated in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 or the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2) are carried forward and continue to form part of the housing supply. Their expected housing contribution is reflected in the sites with planning permission above (from 2021 to 2041). This local plan presents the existing policies for these sites in Appendix 5.

<b>Sites carried forward from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035:</b>		
	<b>Site name</b>	<b>Total homes allocated by existing policy</b>
a	Ladygrove East	642
b	Didcot North East	2,030
c	Land West of Wallingford	555
d	Land at Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University	500
e	Joyce Grove Nettlebed	20

  

<b>Sites carried forward from the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2):</b>		
	<b>Site name</b>	<b>Total homes allocated by existing policy</b>
f	North-East of East Hanney	50
g	South-West of Faringdon	200
h	Milton Heights	400
i	North-West Radley	240
j	South of Kennington	270
k	North of Shrivenham	500
l	West of Stanford-in-the-Vale	200
m	Land South of Park Road, Faringdon	350
n	North of Abingdon-on-Thames	800
o	South of Faringdon	200
p	Monks Farm (North Grove)	885
q	Grove Airfield	2,500
r	Valley Park	2,550
s	East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	600
t	South-East of Marcham	90
u	Crab Hill (North East Wantage and South East Grove)	1,500
v	North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames	200
w	North of East Hanney	80
x	Land east of Sutton Courtenay	220

Of most significance to pupil place planning, the submitted Joint Local Plan removes the allocation of 3,000 homes at Chalgrove Airfield from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. (It also changes the boundary at Bayswater Brook to delete the land at Sandhills, and deletes two allocations at Nettlebed, but these changes do not substantively alter school planning.)

Pupil generation calculations for the allocated sites will depend on the finally agreed housing numbers, housing mixes and build rates, all of which may vary from the assumptions set out in the Joint Local Plan. Therefore, uncertainty remains as to the exact pupil generation to expect. When an application is submitted, there will be a full “PopCal” assessment to estimate the likely pupil generation which would result, and this would be the basis for Section 106 (s106) negotiations<sup>1</sup> and detailed school planning. The school requirements set out in this Topic Paper are therefore a starting point, but the eventual requirement may differ. Some of the Joint Local Plan sites, such as Bayswater Brook, are already well advanced through the planning process, and the pupil generation calculations made based on the housing mixes and delivery trajectories presented in those applications will differ from those in this document, which are based on the proposed Joint Local Plan policies. Given the uncertainty

<sup>1</sup> Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

over housing mixes and numbers, it is necessary to protect the ability to meet the needs of higher pupil generation if necessary, and also to ensure sufficient capacity to respond to natural fluctuations and unpredictabilities in the population. Where appropriate, it is also necessary to protect the potential for further growth in the longer term. In some cases this will require additional school sites, or school site area, to be protected to enable longer term additional school capacity to be provided.

The timing and triggers for any expansions and new schools will need to be agreed as part of the s106 negotiations for each site, and these will take into account any existing spare capacity within existing schools, and other sources of pressure on school places such as demographic changes and other, smaller housing developments.

At this stage, an estimate of pupil generation has been made using the trajectories set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the housing mix policies HOU3 and HOU4:

Figure 4: Joint Local Plan policy housing mixes use for pupil generation modelling

South Oxfordshire	Percentage of total	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed
Market	50	5	20	69	6
Affordable	50	8	37	46	9

Vale of White Horse	Percentage of total	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed
Market	60	5	10	70	15
Affordable	40	13	34	40	13

Based on these assumptions, pupil generation for the Joint Local Plan allocations (including beyond the Local Plan time period) would be as set out in Figure 5.

Figure 5: summary pupil generation from Joint Local Plan strategic sites

Site	Dwellings	Nursery*	Primary**	Secondary (11-18)**	Special schools ***
<b>SODC</b>					
Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (Policy AS1)	1,700	128	539	447	14
Land adjacent to Culham Campus (Policy AS2)	3,500	222	953	813	26
Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS3)	3,000	233	970	799	26
Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS4)	1,800	120	516	437	14

Land at Bayswater Brook, Edge of Oxford (Policy AS5)	1,450	128	539	447	14
VOWH					
North West of Grove (Policy AS8)	624	44	178	164	5
North West of Valley Park (Policy AS9)	800	66	261	206	7
Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village (Policy AS10)	2,750	161	686	581	19

\* Nursery pupil generation includes only pupils expected to qualify for free early education and childcare as defined in section 1.2.

\*\* Pupil numbers are for state school educated pupils only, i.e. the proportion expected to attend independent schools has already been deducted.

\*\*\* Special school pupil generation includes only pupils expected to required education at a designated special school, and not pupils with special educational needs & disabilities who will be educated at mainstream schools, including in specialist resource bases within mainstream schools.

## 2. Overall school planning principles

The scale of housing development proposed in the Joint Local Plan will require new schools. When planning for new schools, the potential for existing schools to expand or relocate will also be considered, as in some cases this will be a more sustainable solution.

The potential impact of any new school on existing schools also needs to be considered, to ensure a new school does not undermine the financial viability of any existing schools, especially in the early years of operation, when the additional school capacity may grow faster than local population. Schools will often open with a smaller intake than their eventual capacity to avoid destabilising the local market. Depending on the certainty and expected pace of growth, it may be more appropriate to build a smaller school initially and later expand it.

Schools can only operate in certain multiples of sizes, for the reasons of class organisation. This will mean that in some cases, the smallest size of school which can accommodate a development's pupil generation will be larger than the exact expected pupil generation, creating some spare places. The county council will seek to minimise this risk by planning over a wider area as appropriate, but if a new school is solely to meet the generation of a single development, that development will be required to fully fund the school, regardless of any spare capacity which may be created. (For illustration, a development expected to generate 400 primary pupils would be expected to fully fund a 420-place primary school, and not a 400-place school, as a 420-place school would be the smallest school feasible for operational purposes.)

In some cases, the developers of strategic sites requiring a new school may wish to build the school themselves rather than the county council deliver the school. Requests to do so will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and may be agreed where a school is wholly required to meet the needs of that housing development, and where the specification of the school can be confirmed at the stage of drafting the Section 106 agreement.

It is important to maintain some level of spare capacity, to allow for fluctuations in population. *Securing developer contributions for education* (paragraph 81) is clear that local authorities are expected to retain a margin of unfilled places to be able to operate their admissions systems effectively, for example, to offer places to children whose families move mid-year and to provide for parental choice. The precise amount of surplus capacity that is appropriate is for local authorities to judge, depending on local patterns of net migration and churn in the pupil population. Government "Basic Need" funding calculation includes a 2% operating margin at school planning area level to help support parental choice, churn in the pupil population, and the general manageability of the system, but this is to provide operational flexibility to respond to underlying variability in population rather than meet the need for additional school places arising from proposed developments. Housing development introduces an added level of uncertainty, as different developments generate additional pupils at varying rates and scales, and the delivery rate of housing is inherently uncertain.

Oxfordshire pupil data demonstrates that at school planning area level, pupil intakes can fluctuate very considerably. The biggest Reception intake fluctuations from one year to the next at planning area level over the five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24 average 18% increases and -17% decreases. Total primary pupil numbers are more stable, but at school planning area typically fluctuate between -5% and +5%. Secondary pupil numbers show a similar range (after adjusting for known destabilising factors related to cross-border pupil movement).



Based on this, Oxfordshire considers it appropriate to plan on the basis of needing to maintain a level of 5% spare school total capacity in an area to protect against unpredictable fluctuations, while also taking into account that at the point of Reception/Year 7 intake, 5% spare capacity may not be sufficient.

Where a site is required to provide both primary schools and a secondary school, consideration will be given to delivering this as an (all-through) primary and secondary school. At the master-planning stage, locating the secondary school site next to a primary school site keeps open the flexibility to reconfigure as an all-through school.

School sites and buildings need to comply with the county council’s detailed requirements, available from the County’s Property team. Developments are required to provide all school sites fully remediated and serviced, on a freehold basis and at no cost to the council. School build costs will be revised regularly and may be affected by changes in required specification, e.g. as necessary to address the climate emergency, or changes in education policy.

## 2.1 Primary and nursery education

Large strategic developments are expected to include on-site primary and nursery education provision. This is necessary to help build communities and reduce travel to school distances. The preferred size of a new primary school in Oxfordshire is 2 form entry, i.e. 60 children per year group for the Reception-Year 6 age range (420 primary pupils in total) and incorporating a 90-place nursery. It is also OCC’s policy to include a special needs resource base within each new school, except where there are already sufficient local bases. A 2-form-entry school requires a 2.22ha site meeting OCC’s standards for school use.

Where the expected population growth does not require a 2-form-entry school, it may be decided to include a 1-form entry or 1.5-form entry school within the development. However, schools of this size are more challenging to operate, especially in the initial growth phase, due to the lower economies of scale and greater vulnerability to population fluctuations. If a 1-form- entry or 1.5-form entry school is agreed, then a site of 2.22ha will still be required, to protect the ability of the school to expand in later years. The county council would consider whether relocating and expanding an existing local school would offer a more viable and sustainable option.

In some cases, a 3-form-entry school may be the most appropriate solution. This would be an unusually large school in Oxfordshire, and would only be agreed where there is considered to be no realistic potential for more than 3-forms of entry to be required, and that a 3-form entry school would be more sustainable than a 2-form- entry and a 1-form entry school.

Figure 6: Example costs for new primary schools

School Size	Nursery pupils	Primary pupils	Total pupils	Site area required (ha)	Cost (TPI BCIS 390)
1 Form Entry	60	210	270	2.22	£ 8,869,000
1.5 Form Entry	75	315	390	2.22	£11,249,000
2 Form Entry	90	420	510	2.22	£13,262,000
3 Form Entry	120	630	750	3.01	£17,924,000

Source: Gleeds school costs template information to OCC - 2024

In general, new primary schools are required to open by around 400-500 house occupations, unless there is an interim solution identified (such as spare capacity at an existing school), but this trigger will be assessed for each school based on the local context.

In large developments, it is beneficial for facilities to be included for additional early education and childcare provision in addition to schools. This helps to meet the needs of children not qualifying for free early education, and to provide year round (including in school holidays) “wrap-around” childcare. This supports the local economy by removing barriers to parents being economically active. Such provision could be through additional accommodation for commercial nurseries, or additional community facilities which can be used by voluntary playgroups and pre-schools.

## **2.2 Secondary and sixth form education**

Secondary schools vary considerably in size: based on current pupil numbers, Oxfordshire secondary schools range from under 500 pupils to over 2,200 pupils. The largest single-site secondary schools in Oxfordshire have approximately 1,400-1,600 pupils, and this is seen as a suitable target for the upper size limit for new schools.

The smallest size of new secondary school currently approved to open by the Department for Education is 600 places. This size of school is financially vulnerable, and is likely to offer a more restricted curriculum than a larger school. Where possible, the county council would avoid planning to open such small schools. In these cases, the county council would consider whether relocating and expanding an existing local school would offer a more viable and sustainable option, or whether an existing school could be expanded onto a split site.

The county council’s strong preference would be for new schools to be of a scale to include a sixth form, to provide greater breadth and depth of education within schools and facilitate teacher recruitment. This would be generally in line with a school of at least 900 places.

At times, central government policy has supported the opening of smaller, specialist schools, such as Studio Schools, University Technical Colleges or Maths Schools. Typically, these do not cater for the whole secondary age range. It cannot be assumed that such schools would be approved at this stage, and therefore Oxfordshire’s school planning cannot rely on such models in advance, although any opportunities would be considered at the relevant time. These thresholds and school models are determined by central government, and may change due to policy changes.

Oxfordshire therefore plans for new secondary schools to be between 600 and around 1,500 pupils. However, as a 600-place school is unlikely to be able to offer a full curriculum to all year groups, wherever possible new schools will be planned strategically to facilitate schools of at least 900 pupils including sixth form.

Because of the risk of destabilising existing schools, new secondary schools will usually be planned in phases, starting as a 600-place school, later followed by one or more further phases – for example, a second phase equivalent to another 600-place school to create a 1,200-place school. There will be some exceptions to this, where a new school is required from the outset to be larger than 600 places. This will usually only be the case where it is to replace an existing school – for example, a 600-place school is to be replaced by a 1,500 place school to provide the necessary additional capacity in a sustainable and viable manner.

Because of the scale of secondary school required to be financially robust and offer a full curriculum, it will usually be the case that, where a new secondary school is triggered, it will serve more than one strategic housing development, and costs will need to be shared proportionately across multiple developments.

This can mean that the progress of a development not providing a school may be held up by the lack of progress on a development which is providing a school. In some cases, contributions would be required towards temporary accommodation and/or school transport to provide an interim solution ahead of a new school being built.

**Figure 7: Example costs for new secondary schools**

School Size	Site area required (ha)	Cost (TPI BCIS 390)
600-places	4.88	£25,006,000
900-places without sixth form	6.77	£34,092,000
900-places with sixth form	6.77	£36,342,000
1500-places	10.55	£54,827,000

Source: Gleeds school costs template information to OCC - 2024

### 2.3 Special needs education

The challenge of ensuring sufficient education provision for children and young people with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) is recognised as a national and local priority. The number of children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) is rising much more rapidly than can be explained by population growth alone, and the subsequent increase in demand for special school provision has been greater than the increase in the supply of maintained special school places. The growing deficit has been met through increased dependence on higher-cost Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS), resulting in unsustainable pressure on funding for SEND provision. A shortage of places also means it takes longer to place a child in suitable provision, and may mean that children have further to travel to school.

Approximately half of pupils with Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) are educated in mainstream schools, in some cases supported by specialist resource bases, and approximately half attend special schools, some of which are run by the local authority and some of which are independent. Based on current pupil data, approximately 0.9% of primary pupils attend special school, 2.1% of secondary pupils and 1.5% of sixth form pupils. These percentages are deducted from the mainstream pupil contributions referred to above, and generate the number of pupils expected to require education at a special school.

OCC has a deficiency in special school places across Oxfordshire as set out in its [Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy](#). As a result, Oxfordshire has become increasingly dependent on the higher-cost Independent sector, with a 16% increase in the number of Independent school placements (from 265 to 307) between 2020 and 2022, which is placing unsustainable pressure on the council's funding.

Projections created by government-appointed consultants Newton, as part of the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme, estimate that between 2022 and 2027, the number of

Oxfordshire special school pupils will increase by a further 436 children, and without additional capacity being created in maintained special schools, these would also have to be placed at independent schools.

Additional special school capacity is therefore already urgently needed, and is being delivered through a mixture of new schools and expansions of existing schools. A new special school with one class per year group from Nursery to Year 12 would provide 120 places, and would currently be expected to cost £16,921,000 @BCIS TPI = 390, equivalent to £141,008 per pupil.

Funding will be sought from developers to increase special school capacity in proportion to their estimated pupil generation. Because of the small numbers of pupils requiring special school education generated by each development, this provision will usually be off-site. Unless a development site is providing a special school site, it will therefore be required to contribute on a pro rata basis towards the capital costs of building a new special school, and towards the cost of acquiring the land required.



### 3. Site specific requirements: primary schools

Primary school planning for strategic development is generally required on a site-by-site basis, with the intention to contain sufficient primary school capacity within the development as far as is feasible, while taking into account possibilities arising from the existing school network surrounding the development.

#### 3.1 Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (AS1)

Based on 1,700 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 539 primary pupils and 128 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of approximately 2.5 forms of entry.

This area is currently served for primary education by Abbey Woods Academy. This has a capacity (as set in its academy funding agreement) of 300 places, and (as of November 2024) has 140 pupils on roll. School planning in this area is complicated by existing patterns of pupil movement, with approximately a third of Berinsfield residents currently travelling to primary schools outside the village. This adds to the uncertainty about the scale of additional primary school capacity which will be required, as it cannot be confirmed how many spare places the existing school would have by the time the new houses start to be occupied, as that will depend on demographic changes and patterns of parental preference in the meantime.

Different options for providing the necessary additional primary capacity have been considered. These include building a new primary school completely separate from the existing Abbey Woods School; expanding Abbey Woods School on its current site; relocating Abbey Woods onto a new site to enable its expansion; or expanding Abbey Woods onto a split site.

Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the mid-2030s. That far in advance, pupil forecasts have a higher degree of uncertainty, as they relate to children not-yet born. Given the number of variables affecting the need for school provision, options should be kept open as far as possible until there is a firm timescale for the development of Berinsfield allocation, to ensure that decisions are made in light of the latest available data and context.

The options currently expected to be the most likely to be appropriate are:

- Relocating and expanding the existing primary school serving Berinsfield, Abbey Woods Academy. At this stage, this cannot be confirmed as possible or sufficient. The expansion of an existing academy requires the approval of the (central government) Department for Education (DfE) and requires a business case to be submitted by the academy trust. This can only be approved once there is firmer information about timescales for the development, and will only be approved if the DfE considers that the needs of the community would not be better met through having a second school in the village, to promote choice and diversity.
- An additional new school within the strategic development site – with or without expansion of Abbey Woods.

To protect flexibility in planning, the strategic development site is required to provide, on a freehold basis and at no cost to the council, a fully remediated and serviced 3.01ha site for the primary school, to the council's specifications. This would enable up to a 3-form entry school to be delivered.

The eventual sizes and timings of schools would be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area, in particular at Abbey Woods Academy.

### Summary requirement of Berinsfield

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources/comments
Up to the equivalent of 1 * 2.5 form entry school	1 * £15,974,000	1 * 2.22ha plus option on further 0.79ha to protect against future expansion	Site would be expected to fully fund this school, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.
Potential expansion of Abbey Woods Academy	Not yet costed	None if relocation is not sought	As noted in commentary.

### 3.2. Land adjacent to Culham Campus (AS2)

Based on 3,500 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 952 primary pupils and 222 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of just over 4 forms of entry.

The village of Culham has one existing all-through school, the Europa School (a bilingual specialist academy). Prior to March 2020, it also had a small village school, Culham Parochial Primary School, but this has been merged with Clifton Hampden CE Primary School, with all operations moved to Clifton Hampden.

Due to the bilingual nature of the education provided at the Europa School, it would not currently be suitable for all residents of the proposed development. However, should the proposed development go ahead, there would need to be further assessment into whether the Europa could diversify the education it provides in order to meet all local needs, in which case expansion of the Europa School may be appropriate to meet some of the expected pupil generation.

As this potential cannot yet be confirmed, at this stage and in the local context, the site would be required to provide two new 2 form entry primary schools (each 420 primary places and 90 nursery places), each on a 2.22ha site.

The eventual sizes and timings of schools would be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area, in particular at Europa School. Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the early/mid-2030s.

## Summary requirement of Land adjacent to Culham Campus (AS2)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
2 * 2 form entry schools	2 * £13,262,000 = £26,524,000	2 * 2.22ha	Site would be expected to fully fund this school, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.

### 3.3 Land south of Grenoble Road (AS3)

Based on 3,000 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 970 primary pupils and 233 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of just over 4 forms of entry.

The proposed development lies outside the existing Blackbird Leys/Greater Leys area, which currently has five primary schools. Between them, it is expected that these schools could accommodate the first phase of pupil generation expected from this development, ahead of a new school being built, but the scale to which they can do so cannot be confirmed at this stage, given that, based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until at least the mid-2030s. That far in advance, pupil forecasts have a higher degree of uncertainty, as they relate to children not-yet born.

Grenoble Road is a significant physical barrier and the suitability of using primary schools on the north side of Grenoble Road would depend on suitable walking and cycling connections being established by the first housing occupation.

At this stage, in the local context, the site would be required to provide one new 3-form-entry primary schools (630 primary places and 120 nursery places), on a 3.01ha site.

The eventual size and timing of school would be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area. Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the mid-2030s.

## Summary requirement of Land south of Grenoble Road (AS3)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
1 * 3 form entry school	£17,924,000	1 * 3.01ha	Site would be expected to fully fund this school, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.

### 3.4 Land at Northfield (AS4)

Based on 1,800 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 516 primary pupils and 120 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of 2.5 forms of entry.

At this stage, taking into account the local context of existing schools within walking distance, the site would be required to provide one new 2-form-entry primary schools (420 primary places and 90 nursery places), on a 2.22ha site.

The eventual size and timing of school would be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area. Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the mid-2030s.

Summary requirement of Land at Northfield (AS4)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
1 * 2 form entry school	£13,262,000	1 * 2.22ha	Site would be expected to fully fund this school, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.

### 3.5 Land at Bayswater Brook (AS5)

Based on 1,450 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 501 primary pupils and 120 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of over 2 forms of entry.

South Oxfordshire District Council resolved to grant outline planning consent for this development (P22/S4618/O) in October 2024. The councils and the developer have negotiated primary school provision through the planning application, taking into account the local school planning context, where some existing schools within walking distance currently have spare capacity and could accommodate the first phase of pupil generation. Later in the development a new primary school is needed to ensure sufficient school capacity to serve the development when the existing schools reach their capacity. Based on this assessment, the site is required to provide one new 1-form-entry primary school (210 primary places and 60 nursery places), on a 2.22ha site.

Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the early-2030s.

Summary requirement of Land at Bayswater Brook (AS5)



Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
1 * 1 form entry school	£8,869,000	1 * 2.22ha	Site would be expected to fully fund this school, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.

### 3.6 North West of Grove, Grove (AS8)

Based on 624 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 178 primary pupils and 44 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of 1 form of entry.

Additional primary school capacity is already being added to the Grove area to meet permitted housing development. One new school on Grove Airfield opened in 2023 and another is currently planned for 2029. This latter school is planned to be built as a 1 form entry primary to meet the needs of Grove Airfield, but will have sufficient site to be expanded to 2 forms of entry, which would ensure sufficient capacity for the North West Grove development. (In addition, the existing Grove CE Primary School is also planned to expand to meet the needs of the developments at Monk's Farm.) This local context provides sufficient flexibility that the North West of Grove site would not be required to provide an on-site primary school, but would be required to provide a financial contribution towards expansion of off-site primary school provision.

Summary requirement of NW Grove (AS8)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
Funding of primary school expansion equivalent to 1 form of entry	240 primary and nursery places * cost per place of expanding a primary school as advised by the DfE of £24,846 = £5,963,040	n/a	Site would be expected to fully fund this scale of primary school expansion, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.

### 3.7 North West of Valley Park, Didcot (AS9)

Based on 800 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 261 primary pupils and 66 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of just over 1 form of entry.

The permitted neighbouring development at Valley Park (planning permission reference: P14/V/2873/O - 4,254 homes) is providing one 3-form entry primary school, and one 2-form entry primary school. Whether this will also provide sufficient capacity for the NW Valley Park development will need to be assessed when a planning application is submitted. If this is the case, then a financial contribution towards the construction or expansion costs of the Valley

Park schools would be required. If these schools do not have sufficient capacity, North West Valley Park would need to provide its own primary school, and 2.22ha of land for a school site will need to be safeguarded for a one form entry primary school against this possibility.

If a new school is required, based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the late-2030s.

#### Summary requirement of NW Valley Park (AS9)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
1 form of entry in primary school capacity	£8,869,000 based on a new 1 form entry primary school	2.22ha	To be considered in the context of other local developments. To be delivered either on-site or through a financial contribution, tbc.

### 3.8 Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, Shippon (AS10)

Based on 2,750 homes, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site is 686 primary pupils and 161 nursery pupils. In isolation this would require additional primary school provision of just over 3 forms of entry.

Dalton Barracks was designated as a Garden Village in 2019. The Dalton Barracks SPD (adopted 2022) recognises there could be capacity for around 4,500 new homes on the larger Garden Village site. The site is being promoted for up to 5,250 new homes as a phased Garden Village. School provision therefore needs to provide sufficient flexibility to also allow for potential additional longer term growth.

Therefore, primary school provision for the currently proposed Local Plan policy of 2,750 new homes needs to be planned on the basis of being delivered as two primary schools, each requiring a 2.22ha site. A 3.01ha site should be safeguarded for the first primary school to be delivered; as the development progresses the county council could review whether the need for a second primary school could be replaced by expanding the first primary school to 3 forms of entry, but this would only be acceptable if there was a high degree of certainty that this would be sufficient for the site's total pupil generation. Provision of two primary schools would disperse travel to school and provide more local provision. It would also provide flexibility should there be further population growth.

The eventual size and timing of school would be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area. Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new primary school provision is not expected to be required until the mid/late-2030s.

## Summary requirement of Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village (AS10)

Requirement	Cost @ TPI = 390	Site area	Other funding sources
1 * 2 form entry school	£13,262,000	2 * 2.22ha (first site to have the option to go to 3.01ha)	Site would be expected to fully fund these schools, unless other developments are permitted which are dependent on the school capacity provided to mitigate their own impact.
PLUS	PLUS		
1 * 1 form entry school	£8,869,000		
	TOTAL £22,131,000		

### 3.9 Smaller sites

In addition to the strategic allocations set out above, there are a number of smaller sites allocated in Didcot Garden Town (Policies AS6: Rich's Sidings and Broadway, AS7: Land at Didcot Gateway, and AS16: Vauxhall Barracks). These sites each have an estimated capacity of between 100 and 300 homes, and would be incapable of accommodating a new primary school and the number of homes identified in the local plan. The County Council expects that these sites will make contributions to existing or planned primary schools in the Didcot area, which will be determined when the councils consider a planning application for these sites.

Policy HOU2 of the Joint Local Plan includes, as part of the housing supply, windfall allowances of 2,590 in South Oxfordshire and 2,674 in Vale of White Horse, 2021-2041. Planning for school capacity needs to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of those sites not allocated in the Local Plan. In some cases, these sites will be related to the planned new schools within strategic sites, and the strategic site schools may need to have sites larger than the needs of the host development to allow the school to be of sufficient size to also meet the needs of windfall sites. In other cases, expansions of existing primary schools may be necessary in locations where there is significant housing growth.

It is also the case that, particularly in village locations, schools can experience a fall in the local pupil population in the absence of any housing growth, as the local population matures, and young families are either unable to move to the village, or need to move out of the village to be able to afford a home. In such circumstances, the delivery of affordable homes is important in maintaining the financial sustainability of local schools.

The local school planning context will vary over time, as a result of demographic fluctuations, and the appropriate school provision will need to be assessed when planning applications are submitted in the light of pressures on school capacity at that time. In this report we have assumed there will not be a need for any entirely new sites for primary schools as a result of windfall housing developments.

## 4. Site specific requirements: secondary schools

As set out above, secondary school planning cannot be done on a site-by-site basis in isolation. Rather than planning site-by-site, therefore, a strategic approach is proposed to meet the needs of the proposed housing growth, including across district boundaries. Three new locations for secondary schools are proposed specifically related to the Joint Local Plan allocations, located so as to maximise the sustainability and efficiency of new and existing schools.

### 4.1. Strand 1: Strategic sites surrounding Abingdon – Land at Berinsfield Garden Village (AS1), Land adjacent to Culham Campus (AS2), Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village (AS10)

Based on the proposed Joint Local Plan housing allocations for land at Berinsfield Garden Village, land adjacent to Culham Campus and Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of these three sites is 1,841 secondary pupils, comprising 1,535 in Years 7-11 and 306 in the sixth form.

This area is currently served by secondary schools in the Abingdon school planning area – Larkmead School, John Mason School, Fitzharrys School, and the all-through bi-lingual Europa School. The Europa School has a markedly different admissions policy from the other schools and generally it is expected that its secondary pupils are those who have already attended the school as primary pupils. As the school is fully-subscribed, and serves a very wide area as the only provider of bilingual education, it cannot be assumed to provide capacity to meet the needs of housing development.

Pupil forecasts for these schools were calculated summer 2024, including housing developments with planning permission, and allocations in adopted Local Plans at that time. These forecasts indicate there will be little or no spare Year 7 (secondary transfer) places from 2026 onwards.

The housing growth included in the Joint Local Plan therefore requires additional secondary school capacity in line with the full extent of expected pupil generation.

Two new secondary schools are planned in this Abingdon area, one within land adjacent to Culham Campus and one within Dalton Barracks Garden Village. These schools are needed to meet the needs of these strategic sites, along with other housing development in the area, in a way that fully supports social and environmental sustainability by ensuring local availability of secondary school places for both new and existing communities. The new school at land adjacent to Culham Campus allocation would become the nearest secondary school to Berinsfield, and it would be to this school that Berinsfield pupils (including from AS1 Land at Berinsfield Garden Village allocation) would qualify for free transport (provided that they live more than 3 miles from the school, which is expected to be the case). The Dalton Barracks school would become the nearest secondary school to Kingston Bagpuize, and it would be to this school that Kingston Bagpuize pupils would qualify for free transport. The new school would therefore provide flexibility to meet the needs of Kingston Bagpuize growth as well as planned Dalton Barracks growth

For both Culham and Dalton Barracks, options would be explored for how the required new schools would relate to existing nearby schools, including whether they are delivered as satellite site expansions of existing schools, or through the relocation and expansion of an existing school. This is in order to maximise the economic sustainability of schools.

To provide an even distribution of secondary school capacity, which is important for minimising travel to school distances, each school would currently be expected to be 900-places to provide between them the necessary additional 1,800 places related to the Joint Local Plan housing development. Each 900-place secondary school would require a site area of 6.77ha. However, to provide flexibility for local planning, future-proof for subsequent local plans, and ensure one development is not frustrated by the slow delivery of a secondary school on another site, land should be safeguarded for each school to be up to 1,500-places, which would require sites of 10.55ha.

The contribution from each development at this stage is based on the cost of building two 900-place secondary schools at £36,342,000 each @ BCIS TPI=390. For the purposes of the Local Plan this cost has been divided between these three sites on a pro rata basis according to the allocated number of dwellings proposed in the Local Plan. The eventual contribution will be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, based on the agreed housing numbers, mix, build-rate, and local school planning context at that time.

Site	% of dwellings	Cost basis for contribution	Estimated contribution @ BCIS TPI = 390
Land at Berinsfield (AS1)	21	Pro rata share of 2 * £36,342,000	£15,542,491
Land adjacent to Culham Campus (AS2)	44	Pro rata share of 2 * £36,342,000	£31,999,245
Land at Dalton Barracks (AS10)	35	Pro rata share of 2 * £36,342,000	£25,142,264

The cost of land would need to be equalized between the developments. Land adjacent to Culham Campus (AS2) and Land at Dalton Barracks (AS10) will each be required to each provide a 6.77ha core site (in line with a 900-place secondary school) plus a 3.78ha land option to safeguard for expansion (10.55ha). Protection against such potential expansion is necessary given the long timescales concerned, which increase uncertainty, and the limited options to expand secondary school capacity otherwise in the Abingdon area. Such expansion may also be necessary if, for example, one of the two sites does not progress to the point of providing its new secondary school, in which case the other site are would need to provide flexibility to meet all the increased need for secondary school provision in the area.

Based on an assumed land cost (which may change) of £409,761/ha for education land, and a 6.77ha site providing for 900 pupils, the value of each school site would be assessed at £2,774,082, a total of £5,548,164. To equalise the land values based on Local Plan housing allocations, Land at Berinsfield would be required to pay a land contribution of £1,186,000 (21% of the total) to recompense Land at Dalton Barracks and land adjacent to Culham Campus developments.

Based on the trajectories currently assumed, any new secondary school provision is not expected to be required until the mid-2030s, at which point they would be admitting children who are not-yet born. Given the number of variables affecting the need for school provision, at this stage it is not possible to have a clear timescale for when each school would need to open, and this would need to be assessed when there is a firm timescale for the delivery of the developments to ensure that decisions are made in light of the latest available data and context.

## **4.2 Strand 2: Oxford fringes – land south of Grenoble Road (AS3), land at Northfield (AS4), land at Bayswater Brook (AS5)**

Based on the proposed housing numbers for Grenoble Road, Northfield and Bayswater Brook, the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of these three sites is 1,640 secondary pupils, comprising 1,367 in Years 7-11 and 273 in the sixth form.

This area is currently served by six secondary schools in the Oxford school planning area – Cherwell School, Cheney School, Greyfriars School, Oxford Spires Academy, The Oxford Academy and The Swan School. Based on their academy funding agreements, these schools have a combined physical capacity for 8,795 pupils, of which 1,956 are sixth form places.

Pupil forecasts for these schools were calculated summer 2024, including housing developments with planning permission, and allocations in adopted Local Plans at that time. These forecasts indicate that there would be expected to be sufficient sixth form capacity to accommodate the projected pupil generation from the Joint Local Plan allocated sites around the edge of Oxford, and therefore these three sites will not be required to contribute towards additional sixth form capacity.

For the Year 7-11 age range, based on current forecasts, there would be estimated to be around 300 surplus places in the absence of impact from the Joint Local Plan allocations, taking into account the need to ensure some spare places to respond to natural population fluctuations. This surplus physical capacity can be used to mitigate against the impact of planned growth, and the financial contribution required from these three Joint Local Plan allocated sites would be reduced proportionately, based on the number of dwellings allocated in the local plan.

While the housing growth included in the Joint Local Plan requires an additional secondary school, it therefore does not require additional secondary school capacity in line with the full extent of expected pupil generation from these three sites. Based on the currently forecast school planning context in the local area, a 900-place school would be sufficient to mitigate the impact of these developments, although in the first instance this is expected to be built as a 600-place school with potential to expand. A 900-place school would require a site of 6.77ha; however, given the long timescales concerned, which increase uncertainty, the risk of one of the other planned school sites not progressing, and the limited options to expand secondary school capacity otherwise in the Oxford area, a site area sufficient for a 1,500-place school is required, which would be 10.55ha.

Options would be explored for how the required new school would relate to existing nearby schools, including whether it is delivered as a satellite site expansion of an existing school. This is in order to maximise the economic sustainability of schools.

It should be noted that it will not be the case that all of the children from the allocated sites will attend the new school. Families are able to choose which school to apply to, and some will choose other schools. However the additional capacity created by the new school is still directly related to the housing development, as it provides additional capacity in the local education system as a whole which then enables the operation of parental preference.

The contribution from each development at this stage is based on the cost of building one 600-place secondary school at £25,006,000 @ BCIS TPI=390. For the purposes of the Local Plan this cost has been divided between these three sites on a pro rata basis according to the



allocated number of dwellings proposed in the Local Plan. The eventual contribution will be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, based on the agreed housing numbers, mix, build-rate, and local school planning context at that time.

Site	% of dwellings	Cost basis for contribution	Estimated contribution @ BCIS TPI = 390
Land South of Grenoble Road (AS3)	48	Pro rata share of £25,006,000	£12,002,880
Land at Northfield (AS4)	29	Pro rata share of £25,006,000	£7,201,728
Land at Bayswater Brook (AS5)	23	Pro rata share of £25,006,000	£5,801,392

The cost of land would need to be equalized between the developments. Grenoble Road will be required to provide a 6.77ha core site plus a 3.78ha land option to safeguard for expansion (10.55ha).

Based on an assumed land cost (which may change) of £409,761/ha for education land, and a 6.77ha site, the value of the school site would be assessed at £2,774,082. To equalise the land values based on Local Plan housing allocations, Northfield would be required to pay a land contribution of £798,936 (29% of the total) and Bayswater Brook a land contribution of £643,587 (23% of the total) to recompense Grenoble Road.

### 4.3 Strand 3: Didcot area – NW Valley Park (AS9)

Based on the proposed Joint Local Plan housing allocation for NW Valley Park (AS9), the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site would be 206 secondary pupils.

A new school to serve the Didcot area is planned for NE Didcot<sup>2</sup>, and this will have sufficient site area for the school to expand to provide sufficient capacity in the Didcot area to meet the needs generated by NW Valley Park. It should be noted that it is not expected that all of the children from the allocated site will attend the new school. Families are able to choose which school to apply to, and some will choose other schools. However the additional capacity created by the new school is still directly related to the housing development, as it provides additional capacity in the local education system as a whole which then enables the operation of parental preference.

This development would be required to pay towards the expansion of the planned school based on their estimated pupil generation, and the DfE-advised cost per pupil of secondary school expansion, which is currently £31,066@ BCIS TPI = 390. Based on 206 pupils generated, the contribution would therefore be £6,399,596. The eventual contribution will be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area.

<sup>2</sup> See Policy HOU2b – site allocated for 2,030 homes, with planning permission. Site is already under construction.

Expansion of the secondary school to meet the needs of this proposed development triggers the need to exercise the option the county council has secured on expansion land for this school, and incurs an additional cost to the county council, set in the s106 agreement for the host site at £1,594,892 index linked to July 2017 using RPIX, providing sufficient land for an additional 600 pupils. NW Valley Park may therefore also be required to provide a financial contribution towards this cost.

The council also expects the smaller allocations within Didcot Garden Town (Policies AS6: Rich's Sidings and Broadway, AS7: Land at Didcot Gateway, and AS16: Vauxhall Barracks). will make contributions to existing or planned secondary schools in the Didcot area, which will be determined when the councils consider a planning application for these sites.

#### **4.4 Strand 4: Wantage & Grove area – NW Grove (AS8)**

Based on the proposed Joint Local Plan housing allocation for NW Grove (AS8), the proposed Joint Local Plan housing mix policies set out above, and the illustrative trajectory shown in Figure 2 above, the estimated pupil generation of this site would be 164 secondary pupils.

A new all-through (including secondary) school to serve the Grove area opened in 2023, with the secondary phase opening in 2025, and this will have sufficient site area for the school to expand to meet the needs generated by NW Grove.

This development would be required to pay towards the expansion of the planned school based on their estimated pupil generation, and the DfE-advised cost per pupil of secondary school expansion, which is currently £31,066@ BCIS TPI = 390. Based on 164 pupils generated, the contribution would therefore be £5,094,824. The eventual contribution will be agreed through s106 negotiations at the time of any application, informed by the school planning situation in the surrounding area.

Expansion of the secondary school to meet the needs of this proposed development triggers the need to exercise one of the options the county council has secured on expansion land for this school, and incurs an additional cost to the county council, set in the s106 agreement for the host site at £655,500 per option area index linked to July 2017 using RPIX. NW Grove may therefore also be required to provide a financial contribution towards this cost.

#### **4.5 Smaller sites**

Policy HOU2 of the Joint Local Plan includes, as part of the housing supply, windfall allowances of 2,590 in South Oxfordshire and 2,674 in Vale of White Horse, 2021-2041. Planning for school capacity needs to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of those sites not allocated in the Local Plan. In some cases, these sites will be related to the planned new schools within strategic sites, and the strategic site schools may need to have sites larger than the needs of the host development to allow the school to be of sufficient size to also meet the needs of windfall sites. In other cases, expansions of existing secondary schools may be necessary in locations where there is significant housing growth.

It is also the case that, particularly in village locations, schools can experience a fall in the local pupil population in the absence of any housing growth, as the local population matures, and young families are either unable to move to the village, or need to move out of the village to be able to afford a home. In such circumstances, the delivery of affordable homes is

important in maintaining the financial sustainability of local schools.

The local school planning context will vary over time, as a result of demographic fluctuations, and the appropriate school provision will need to be assessed when planning applications are submitted in the light of pressures on school capacity at that time. In this report we have assumed there will not be a need for any entirely new sites for secondary schools as a result of windfall housing developments.

## 5. Site specific requirements: Special Education

In addition to ensuring sufficient mainstream school capacity to meet the needs of housing growth, it is also vital to ensure sufficient special school capacity.

OCC has a deficiency in special school places across Oxfordshire as set out in its [Oxfordshire SEND Sufficiency Delivery Strategy 2022/23-2026/27](#). The proposed housing growth in the Local Plan is expected to further increase demand for places at special schools in the area.

Because special schools each cover a large area of population, schools outside of South & Vale contribute towards ensuring sufficient capacity for local residents, just as schools in South & Vale serve a wider population. Additional special education provision anywhere in Oxfordshire therefore indirectly contributes towards ensuring sufficient capacity for South & Vale residents, by reducing pressure on more local schools.

Across South & Vale, three new special schools are currently in the pipeline: two schools focusing on Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs in Faringdon and Didcot, and a community special school within the Valley Park development to the west of Didcot, which would focus more on needs other than SEMH and ASD, including Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).

A contribution towards expansion of special school capacity, including towards the cost of acquiring suitable sites, will therefore be required from all developments based on the percentage of the pupil generation who would be expected to require places at a special school.

As well as special schools, new mainstream schools will be specified to include a SEND Unit / Resource Base to provide an intermediate level of provision.

## 6. Deallocation of Chalgrove Airfield

Policy STRAT7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 allocated Chalgrove Airfield for 3,000 homes, with two primary schools and a secondary school. The Joint Local Plan does not continue this allocation. This would have implications for how the school capacity needs of any smaller housing developments in the Chalgrove-Watlington area would be met.

The two new primary schools which would have been provided in the Chalgrove Airfield development would have provided flexibility to increase primary education capacity in response to other local housing developments. The village of Chalgrove has one existing primary school, Chalgrove Community Primary School, which has a capacity (as set in its academy funding agreement) of 210 places, and (as of November 2024) has 189 pupils on roll. There is already significant housing development permitted for Chalgrove village, which is expected to put pressure on primary school capacity in the village.

Assessment of the potential to expand Chalgrove Primary School has been undertaken and has identified barriers to such expansion. A feasibility study commissioned by the Acer Academy Trust, the responsible body for Chalgrove Primary School, identified that the layout and nature of the school's current site would not facilitate expansion of the school. There is currently no confirmed viable route to expanding Chalgrove Primary School to meet the needs of any further local population growth, whether from demographic changes or from more housing development (beyond that which already has planning permission). The discontinuing of the allocation therefore constrains future growth opportunities at Chalgrove, and removes the option for flexibility in meeting the need for primary school provision in the area.

The Chalgrove Airfield development would have also included a secondary school, and the Department for Education has granted in-principle approval for this to be delivered as a relocation and expansion of Icknield Community College, Watlington. This would have resolved a number of constraints and challenges faced by Icknield Community College in its current location. Most obviously, it would have provided brand new accommodation for the delivery of education in the 21st century, to replace the school's current aging accommodation which presents condition and suitability concerns. It would also have facilitated the school's expansion to a scale at which it could support a sixth form, broadening the educational offer and reducing the distances that post-16 students need to travel to continue their education. In addition, it could have provided new facilities for community use.

Icknield Community College is expected to need to grow even without the Chalgrove allocation, to meet the needs of other local housing developments. Land has been secured, on the opposite side of the planned Watlington Relief Road, to provide for that growth. Additional capacity has so far been provided in temporary classrooms, pending confirmation of whether Chalgrove Airfield would go ahead. If the school is not relocated, these temporary classrooms will need to be replaced with permanent accommodation, and the funding sought within the Section 106 agreements for development in the Watlington area will need to include flexibility to allow for this.

Therefore, for any planning application for significant residential development in this area, the most appropriate education capacity solution and contributions for primary, secondary and special school provision will be sought, in light of this proposed de-allocation.

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