The School Place Planning Infrastructure Growth Plan for Somerset 2019

Produced by: Schools Commissioning Team, Somerset County Council
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The School Place Planning
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1. **The School Place Planning Infrastructure Growth Plan**

The purpose of the School Place Planning Infrastructure Growth Plan (IGP) for Somerset is to capture in one place:

- The policies and principles that underpin all decision making with regards to ensuring the sufficiency of school places.
- The planned and anticipated housing growth and the potential impact on school places across Somerset.
- The potential strategies the Local Authority (LA) has put in place for addressing any shortfalls in school places across Somerset.

For the purpose of school place planning, the County of Somerset is divided into 20 School Organisation Plan (SOP) areas:

- Ansford
- Bridgwater
- Burnham-on-Sea
- Chard
- Cheddar
- Crewkerne and Ilminster
- Frome
- Glastonbury
- Huish Episcopi
- North Mendip
- Shepton Mallet
- Stoke-sub-Hamdon
- Street
- Taunton
- Wellington
- Wells
- West Somerset
- Wincanton
- Wiveliscombe
- Yeovil

The SOP areas are based upon secondary schools and the primary schools that are expected to feed into them. The LA’s school population forecasts are published by SOP area and the School Place Planning Infrastructure Growth Plan has also been presented using this format. Appendix A shows a map of the county broken down by the 20 SOP areas.

2. **The Local Authority Statutory Duty to Provide School Places (Mainstream and Special)**

The LA has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient, good quality school places in Somerset (Education Act 1996).

This was reaffirmed when the Government published the white paper ‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’ on 17 March 2016 in which paragraph 4.77a states that one of the LA’s education duties is ‘ensuring every child has a school place: including that there are sufficient school, special school and alternative provision places to meet demand. Local Authorities will retain responsibility for this in a fully academised system’.
3. The Local Authority Duty to Provide Early Years Places

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities in England to ‘secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children)’.

This Act also requires LAs to secure prescribed early years provision free of charge. The entitlement to 15 hours of funded childcare per week (570 hours per year) for all three- and four-year olds was introduced in 2010 and from 2013, two-year olds from disadvantaged families became eligible for the entitlement.

The Childcare Act 2016 introduced the extended entitlement of an additional 15 hours per week (570 hours per year) of funded childcare for three- and four-year olds of working parents meeting certain income criteria.

The Early Years Team produces a county-wide sufficiency report annually which provides a more in-depth analysis of early years provision across Somerset and can be found here: https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/childcare-sufficiency/. It is intended that this year’s report will be published by September 2019.

In the early years sector there are 585 providers (312 group childcare settings across the private, voluntary and independent sector, maintained schools and academies). All these providers are in the Somerset Directory of Nursery Providers and able to offer the Early Years Entitlement. There are also 273 registered childminders working from domestic premises; of these 191 are in the Somerset Directory. Information relating to the directory can be found here: https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/finding-childcare/.

4. The Policies and Principles of Early Years and School Place Planning

The Policies and Principles of Early Years and School Place Planning were reviewed in early 2019. The updated Policies and Principles were approved by Cabinet by 10th June 2019.

The policies and principles take account of the 4 priorities in ‘Our Plan’ – Somerset’s Plan for Children Young People and Families 2019-2022 which are:

- Supported Families – strengthening families and Building resilient communities
- Healthy Lives – families making right choices to support happy healthy lifestyles
- Great Education – high aspiration, opportunities and achievement for all
- Positive Activities – getting the most out of life through play, leisure cultural and sporting opportunities

Provision of Good Quality School Places

The Council has an extensive education capital investment programme to support the expansion of school place provision in certain parts of the County. Other parts of the County are experiencing a decline in pupil number. Guidance issued by the DfE in October 2018 states that the governments expectation is that Local Authorities should create additional places in schools that have an overall rating of ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’.
When will additional places be considered?

Primary Schools

When needing to increase the number of primary school places, SCC will look first to expand local schools for local children where reasonable and practicable. If expansion of local schools is not an option due to size constraints or the number of new places required, SCC will seek to secure a new school (the Department for Education currently require an academy sponsor to open a new Free School either through a direct Free School bid to or via a Local Authority presumption competition).

Secondary Schools

For secondary schools SCC will apply the principles of the sufficiency calculations (school capacity) and consider cases for additional accommodation (basic need) where pupil forecasts at academies exceed the pupil place capacity for 3 years from local demand. In the case of maintained schools pupil forecasts will need to exceed the net capacity figure for 3 years from local demand.

The availability of places at schools that are within statutory walking distance will also be a factor. If expansion of local schools is not an option due to size constraints or the number of new places required, SCC will seek to secure a new school (the Department for Education currently require an academy sponsor to open a new Free School either through a direct Free School bid to or via a Local Authority presumption competition).

All Though Schools

Where the number of new school places required is sufficient in size and age range the LA will consider providing all-through provision.

Special Schools

When needing to increase the number of specialist provision places, SCC will look first to expand local schools for local children where reasonable and practicable. If expansion of local schools is not an option due to size constraints or the amount of new places required, SCC will seek an academy sponsor to open a new Free School either through a direct Free School bid to the Department for Education or via a Local Authority presumption competition.

Early Years places

SCC has a statutory duty (Childcare Acts 2006 and 2016) to ensure sufficient childcare places are available for parents to access to enable them to return to work or access training. Provision must be planned to cater for the new births, and also eligible children to access childcare and funded entitlements. The DfE require that all eligible two year olds should access provision that is rated good or outstanding. The market in Somerset consists mainly of private, voluntary and independent providers and SCC has very few provisions that it is responsible for.

When there is a need to increase childcare places SCC will look at a range of options including to the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector to facilitate and
encourage expansion. The PVI sector provides the largest proportion of early years and childcare places. When there is EFSA funding available it is targeted to areas of greatest need as shown in sufficiency assessments.

SCC will also look to maximise value for money and where appropriate, work with partners to secure the additional places.

What types of additional provision will we build?

When building new school provision SCC will promote its own benchmark based on the principles of the relevant Building Bulletins. School buildings will also be compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure as many children as possible with additional needs can be taught in mainstream education.

Early Years provision will comply with the Early Years Foundation Stage standards and be inclusive.

Who will we engage with when seeking to add new places?

SCC will work with all types of education and early years provision, maintained schools, multi academy trusts, dioceses and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), district councils, developers, neighbouring authorities to ensure a sufficient supply of ‘good’ early years and school places.

In line with DfE guidance SCC will seek developer/CIL contributions towards school places that are created to meet the need arising from Housing Developments. Contributions MUST cover the full cost of providing the new school places that are required.

How will we work with the local community?

SCC will endeavour to promote children and young people’s participation in public decision making so they can inform and shape decision making now and in the future.

SCC will ensure that before any final decisions regarding early years and school place planning are made an Impact Assessment will be completed and have received the relevant sign off.

Due regard will be taken of a sustainable transport strategy to minimise the reliance on the SCC school transport budget by encouraging and facilitating children to walk or cycle to school, rather than travelling by motorised transport.

SCC will encourage working with partners regarding community use facilities where this is reasonable and practical.

SCC or Academy Trust will ensure effective consultation with parents and other interested parties to gauge demand for their proposed changes and to provide them with sufficient opportunity to give their views.

SCC will encourage early years providers and schools to seek the views of the local community when establishing provision.
5. School Provision in Somerset

Somerset is a rural authority with a total population of 555,195 of which 97,551 are under 16 years of age (Office for Nations Statistics, 2017 mid-year estimates published in June 2018). This indicates that the population of Somerset has risen by 3,749 (0.68%). The total number of children under the age of 16 is broken down by district in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mendip</th>
<th>Sedgemoor</th>
<th>South Somerset</th>
<th>Taunton Deane</th>
<th>West Somerset</th>
<th>Somerset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 16</td>
<td>20,409</td>
<td>22,037</td>
<td>29,218</td>
<td>21,168</td>
<td>4,719</td>
<td>97,551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are currently 267 state funded schools in Somerset:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of School – May 2019</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy Converter</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy Sponsor Led</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy special convertor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Free School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Aided</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Controlled</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 267 schools in Somerset 107 are Academies (including 3 Free Schools) and accountable directly to the Secretary of State for Education. A new free school will open in Taunton in September 2019.

The County hosts a mixture of the two tier (primary and secondary) and three tier system (first, middle and upper) and has a mixed economy of maintained schools and academies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of School – May 2019</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants School</td>
<td>4 - 7</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior School</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>4 -11</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First School</td>
<td>4 - 9</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>9 -13</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>11 -13</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper School</td>
<td>13 -16</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Through</td>
<td>4 -16</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. New Schools

There are currently two routes for establishing new schools.

The Education Act 2011 changed the arrangements for establishing new schools and introduced section 6A (the free school presumption) to the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Where an LA thinks there is a need for a new school in its area it must seek proposals to establish a free school. The LA will draw up a specification for the new provision; set out a timetable; and invite applicants to bid to establish the new school. However, the final decision on who opens the school will be made by the Secretary of State for Education. Under the presumption route the LA is responsible for securing funding to cover the capital costs of the new school building (through developer contributions and basic need grant) and for funding the set-up costs.

Alternatively, anyone can bring forward a proposal to open a new free school and can apply directly to the Department for Education (DfE) to do so. LA’s can also encourage Multi Academy Trusts in their area to apply via the department’s free school programme where they know that a free school will help meet the need for additional places in their area. If new schools are approved via this route, then the Education Funding Agency will fund the capital cost of the new school building and will also fund the set-up costs. The wave 14 window for mainstream schools opened in January 2019 with a deadline for applications of 30 September 2019.

Appendix B lists the potential new schools required in Somerset until 2030.

7. Somerset School Population Forecasts

New forecasts are produced annually based on the latest number on roll and pre-school children data. This ensures any new information on school organisation or new housing developments will be included and allows the forecasts to react to changes in parental preference.

The 2018 School Population Forecasts have been calculated using as the base data, the actual number on roll for October 2018 (as supplied by schools as part of the Department for Education (DFE) School Census). The forecast of future reception year groups, those children currently of pre-school age, is based on data obtained from Health Authority records. For primary schools the forecasts are produced for the period up to 2023, for middle school areas the forecasts the period up to 2027, and for secondary school areas up to 2029.

The School Population Forecasts are produced in line with DfE guidance. The DfE guidance states ‘your pupil forecasts should only include expected pupil yields from housing developments that have a high probability of being delivered within the timeframe of the forecasts’. The school forecasts of migration therefore include a contribution to reflect housing developments where full planning approval has either been granted, or where outline planning permission has been granted and there is a reasonable expectation that development will commence within the next 5 years (as supported by the district planning authority 5-year housing supply data).

As part of the LA’s statutory duty, the forecast data is reported to the DFE as part of the annual School Capacity Collection return (SCAP). The DFE use the pupil forecast data to
inform the basic need funding allocation which assists LAs in providing the school places required to meet future demand.

8. The Pressure on School Places

From 2009 to 2018 the number of primary aged pupils in Somerset increased from 36,781 to 41,388 an increase of 12.53% or 4,607 which is the equivalent of 154 additional classes of 30 pupils.

This increase is particularly high in urban areas. Bridgwater has seen an increase of 31.95%, Taunton an increase of 20.62% and Yeovil an increase of 14.71% since 2009.

Since 2013 the capacity of our primary schools has increased by 4150 places (139 classes). This includes 442 places brought back into use, 2,184 places added to existing school sites and 1,524 places through the provision of new primary schools or the expansion and relocation of existing primary schools.

The LA will aim to maintain a 4.5% surplus capacity in schools to ensure it can deliver additional places in line with demand and parental preferences. The current surplus capacity for primary year groups across Somerset is 4.26% in urban areas and 9.07% in rural areas (May 2019).

It is important for the LA to maintain a surplus capacity to ensure there are sufficient places for in year applications due to moves into a catchment area e.g. military families (see section 13 for more on this practice as part of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant) or the purchase of a new home.

In year school admissions relate to a child changing school outside of the usual transfer cycle, even if this is for a place in Reception or Year 7. Most commonly, this will happen where the family moves house and it is no longer practical for the child or children to travel to their current school on a daily basis. The house move may be in-county (moving from one Somerset address to another and one Somerset school to another) or the family might be moving from elsewhere into Somerset.

9. The Birth Rate

The table below shows the number of live births in Somerset between 2004 and 2017.

Data source: ONS (Live Births by Area of Usual Residence 2004 – 2017)
The birth rate increased steadily in Somerset between 2004 and 2011. At its peak in 2011 there were 5,764 births in Somerset, 665 more than the low of 5,099 in 2004. This equates to 22 additional classes of children requiring reception places across Somerset in 2015 than were needed in 2008.

Although the birth rate has been fluctuating since 2012, it is still considerably higher than the period 2004 – 2007 and these recent increases will be seen with the number of children applying for reception places over the coming years.

The table below shows the number of live births in Somerset between 2004 and 2017 by district.

![Number of live births - by District 2004 - 2017](image)

Data source: ONS (Live births by Area of Usual Residence 2004 – 2017)

10. **Housing**

In addition to the demographic growth, the number of new houses being built in Somerset has increased in recent years.

![Dwellings Completed, Somerset 2006/07 - 2017/18](image)

Data source: Department for Communities and Local Government (Housebuilding completions 2006/07 – 2017/18)
The growth in urban areas such as Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil is particularly high with large housing developments at Wilstock, Stockmoor and Kings Down (Bridgwater), Monkton Heathfield and Northwalls Grange (Taunton) and Brimsmore, Augusta Park and Wyndham Park (Yeovil). District Council housing data indicates that upwards of 15,000 homes are expected to be built in these areas by 2032. In addition, we are starting to see an increase in the number of housing developments being built in rural areas such as Cheddar, Milborne Port, Puriton and Woolavington.

One of the challenges for the LA is the uncertainty of the developers’ build out rate, particularly the phasing of large developments when outline applications have been approved but reserved matters applications have not yet been submitted.

Another significant challenge for the LA is managing the education requirement from housing developments where there is only one school within statutory walking distance of the new housing. If this school is at capacity and on a restricted site which cannot be expanded, a development of anything less than that which would yield the need for a new school will be problematic for the LA.

11. Yield of Children from New Housing Developments

The LA applies a formula to calculate the number of pupils that new housing developments will yield. These formulas are used to plan school places and to request education contributions from developers.

Until recently the formula the LA used was based on the 2001 census and calculated by using existing dwellings across the county because it was considered that the formula should be based on the yield of children over the lifetime of a development. This yield was also based on the number of year groups a school has i.e. the same formula was used for both a first school and a secondary school because they both have 5 year groups.

In recent years the LA has become aware that the yield of pupils from recently built housing developments was higher, particularly for primary aged children. A number of housing developments in Bridgwater and Taunton were monitored and the analysis showed that the yield for nursery and primary aged children was considerably higher. In December 2017 the LA commissioned a formal review of the pupil yield formulas.

In 2018 Cognisant Research undertook a review of the formulas the LA uses to calculate the number of children a new housing development will yield. 5,000 properties built in Somerset since 2012 were visited and 1,205 surveys were completed from homes across all districts within the county. The data provided a revised set of formulas for the LA to use and the final report produced by Cognisant Research can be found in Appendix C. A key decision paper approving the revised pupil yields was signed off by the Cabinet Member for Education and Council Transformation and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development on the 16th November 2018 and the report can be found here: [http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=952](http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=952). The LA expects to commission a review of the pupil yield every 5 years.

Even with the revised formulas, it is recognised that in some circumstances more children than expected may arise from a particular development. Factors that influence this are social/affordable housing and the relocation of military families. Ultimately the LA has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places regardless of the number of children calculated at the time the education contributions are agreed.
12. Education Contributions through S106/CIL

Historically, where a proposed development would place pressure on school capacity, contributions have been sought from the developer towards the costs of providing additional school places through a Section 106 agreement. The contribution sought is calculated using the formulas referenced in section 10 and can be found in Appendix D. Section 106 agreements are generally only required where the development is of a size to warrant such a contract. Whilst these agreements can vary, generally the education contribution is paid by the developer direct to the LA once certain triggers are met, usually by a specific number of dwelling occupations. These funds are available for use by the LA to provide additional school places through either the expansion of the school facility local to the development or, if the size of the development requires it, the provision of a new school.

Recent changes within the planning system have resulted in the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is applied to all developments regardless of size. Where a Local Planning Authority (LPA) chooses to implement a CIL system and includes education within their CIL charging structure, the ability to request education contributions direct from the developer through a section 106 agreement is lost. Instead the LA will need to secure funding direct from the LPA for the additional school places that result from new housing developments.

In April 2019 the Department for Education (DfE) published guidance on how councils can seek funding from housing developments in their area and use it to create school places. This guidance makes it clear that developers should meet the full cost of providing additional school places that arise as a result of their development and can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-schools-to-support-housing-growth](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-schools-to-support-housing-growth).

CIL can be implemented by each LPA in a different way and therefore there isn’t a uniform approach across the planning authorities in Somerset. This has resulted in situations where in one LPA large urban extensions are included within CIL and education contributions cannot be sought via a section 106 agreement, whilst the neighbouring LPA has excluded large urban extensions from their CIL and it is possible for education contributions to be obtained via a section 106 agreement. This is because the new legislation makes it clear that developers cannot be charged twice. If education is included within the LPA’s CIL charging structure then a contribution cannot also be requested via a section 106 agreement with the developer.

The table below identifies which system the planning authorities currently have in place for education contributions to be secured:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>System currently in place for education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mendip</td>
<td>S106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedgemoor</td>
<td>S106 for strategic sites, otherwise CIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset West &amp; Taunton</td>
<td>CIL (former TDBC area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S106 (former WSC area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Somerset</td>
<td>S106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exmoor National Park Authority</td>
<td>S106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. **Ministry of Defence**

Somerset County Council is a signatory of the Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant. The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve. It says SCC will do all it can to ensure service personnel are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. SCC's statutory duty includes ensuring that the children of our servicemen and women receive fair treatment in the allocation of school places and other educational resource, regardless of the time a service family has spent in Somerset.

Somerset has a number of military bases, the main ones being RNAS Yeovilton and Norton Manor Camp. The LA works with the Military Families Welfare Offices to ensure that the education needs of the military families moving into Somerset are met.

14. **Hinkley Point C (HPC)**

On 28 June 2016 EDF's Board of Directors made the Final Investment Decision (FID) to build two new nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point in Somerset. Locally, County and District Councils continue to work on the required local infrastructure for the project utilising Section 106 monies that were released as part of the preparation for the build.

Section 106 contributions included funds to mitigate against a demand for early years and primary school places by workforce families who bring children into the county. The up-front capital contribution that became available on transition (after FID) has been allocated to the Northgate Primary Free School in Bridgwater.

A further capital sum is detailed in the S106 agreement and may be available to SCC but requires monitoring of the number of workforce children against existing secondary school capacity. Data is being prepared to establish whether a case for claiming this fund can be made to EDF Energy due to the peak in construction being delayed from 2015/16 until 2020/21.

15. **School Organisation Plan Area Summaries**

**Section 1: Mainstream Schools**

The 20 SOP area summaries include information on the capacity of existing provision, school population forecasts and details of housing developments in the area and the number of children these are likely to produce. Any proposals the LA has to mitigate specific pressures in these areas are also outlined in the summaries. The Somerset School Organisation Plan - 2018 (SOP tables) and individual SOP maps are also included as part of the area summaries.

**Section 2: Specialist Provision**

In every area of Somerset there are children who will require places in specialist provision because they have needs that cannot be met in their local mainstream school. For the purpose of the IGP, virtual catchment areas have been created in order to help understand which children are likely to attend which special school. The summaries for these catchment areas include the capacity of existing provision and predicted forecasts based on school population forecasts and the likely number of children requiring specialist provision that housing developments in the area will yield. Any proposals the LA has to mitigate specific pressure in these areas are also outlined in the summaries.