

Advice Note for School Leaders

December 2025

This note outlines the process the County Council follows when responding to planning applications.

Statutory Duties

Cambridgeshire County Council has a statutory duty to provide education facilities for its residents' children.

- Under Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended), the Council must ensure "that efficient primary education and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area."
- The Childcare Act (2006) places a duty on the Council to secure sufficient and suitable quality early education and childcare places for working parents
- The Children & Families Act 2014, places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) of children and young people for whom they are responsible.
- These duties form the foundation of the Council's approach to assessing the impact of new housing developments on local schools.

National Policy Context

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** places strong emphasis on ensuring sufficient choice of school places. Paragraph 100 requires local planning authorities to:

- Take a proactive, positive, and collaborative approach to meeting demand.
- Give great weight to the need to create, expand, or alter schools when preparing plans and deciding applications.
- Work with schools, promoters, delivery partners, and statutory bodies to resolve planning issues early.

This guidance reinforces the Council's responsibility to secure financial contributions that protect and expand education provision where demand can be evidenced.

Section 106 Planning Obligations

- **Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990**, as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, provides the statutory basis for securing developer funding.

- Section 106(1)(d) specifically allows for payments to Local Authorities at specified times or periodically.
- The principle is clear: new housing generates additional pupils, and therefore additional school places must be provided where there is insufficient existing capacity.

Methodology for Education Contributions

The Council applies a well-established process to determine whether contributions are required. For Outline Planning Applications the Council's General Multipliers are used as follows:

1. Pupil Yield Calculation (Cambridge Plus Fringe/Edge Sites)

Using robust multipliers derived from local evidence:

- Early Years = 30 children per 100 dwellings
- Primary = 30 children per 100 dwellings
- Secondary = 25 children per 100 dwellings
- SEND = 1.19 children per 100 dwellings

Pupil Yield Calculation (East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire and the rest of South Cambridgeshire)

Using robust multipliers derived from local evidence

- Early Years = 30 children per 100 dwellings
- Primary = 40 children per 100 dwellings
- Secondary = 25 children per 100 dwellings
- SEND = 1.41 children per 100 dwellings

2. Capacity Assessment

The Council checks whether local schools have enough places for children. Data is updated using school census and NHS records. The number of children expected from new housing developments is compared with the capacity of catchment schools to see if extra places are needed. If pupils would have to travel further than the legal walking distance or there are no safe routes, the Council must provide transport, which adds to costs. Financial contributions are requested when catchment schools cannot meet demand - towards an agreed mitigation project.

Early years mitigation applies only to children entitled to free places (ages 9 months to 4-years).

For Full Planning Applications detailed multipliers are used to more accurately determine child yield.

Compliance with the Planning (CIL)Tests

This approach meets the three statutory tests under Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations:

- **Necessary:** Contributions are sought only where spare capacity does not exist.
- **Directly related:** Funds are spent on the catchment schools or early years facilities serving the development.
- **Fair and reasonable:** The level of contribution is proportional to the number of children generated.

Costing Mitigation Projects

- School project costs are calculated in line with Building Bulletin 103, 98 and 100 standards.
- Where project costs not yet unavailable, the Department for Education scorecard costs are used.
- This ensures transparency, consistency, and fairness in setting contributions.

Guidance for Headteachers in response to proposed developments

- When discussing new developments with parents and the community, we advise remaining impartial, as these may be controversial and will inevitably have both support and opposition.
- In your capacity as Headteacher you are welcome to respond to planning applications, either in support or with concerns.
- If you would like to discuss a planning application with Council officers, please see the contacts below.
- If you are approached by developers, Councillors or other members of the public about planning applications you are welcome to direct them to County Council officers (see contacts below).
- Or if you would like advice or support in responding to enquiries around developments, please let us know, we are happy to support you.

Key points

- The Council's statutory duty ensures that education provision keeps pace with housing growth.
- Contributions are evidence based, legally compliant, and proportionate.
- Funding will be directed to expanding or providing new local schools, safeguarding quality of provision.
- This process protects schools from overcrowding, ensures accessibility, and supports safe travel for pupils.
- Contributions cannot be sought to rectify existing deficiencies (i.e. general maintenance)
- Should you have any questions about this process, please contact placeplanningreferrals0-19@cambridgeshire.gov.uk for support OR developmentgrowth@cambridgeshire.gov.uk for town planning matters.