

## 9. Further Information on Education: Engagement with Academy Providers

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9.1 Further to issues raised during examination hearings on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September, the following note sets out relevant information on schools expected to be required to take on additional permanent capacity during the local plan period, in order to manage additional pupils arising from housing growth set out in the Plan.

	<b>School</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
Secondary	IES Breckland  (in Brandon)	Established as a Free School which, once established, is operated as an Academy.	The school has indicated that it would be willing to expand to meet future demand, as discussed with the school on 01/11/2017. As previously stated, the existing school site is large enough to enable expansion to provide sufficient places until 2022.
	Mildenhall College Academy	Academy	The County Council is already working with Mildenhall College Academy on the Mildenhall Hub project, so positive discussions are ongoing in respect of the continued expansion of the school. The most recent confirmation of this was on 11/10/2017.
	Newmarket Academy	Academy	Newmarket Academy has indicated to the County Council that it wishes to work with the education authority to explore options for expansion. County Council officers most recently discussed future growth with senior teachers at the school on 08/11/2017.

SIR – post hearing issues for clarification

Primary	Beck Row Primary Academy	Academy	The expansion of the school is in the process of being delivered, with the support of the school.
	Exning Primary School	Local Authority Maintained School	The school participated in masterplanning over the past eighteen months to determine how expansion can be delivered and supported the development measures proposed.
	Moulton CEVC Primary School  (which is the catchment school for the village of Kentford)	Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	The school is in ongoing discussions with the County Council as to how expansion can be delivered, and is supportive of the principle of expansion. The next meeting with the school is planned for 27/11/2017.
	West Row Community Primary School	Local Authority Maintained School	The school has recently (within the last year) expanded and, through discussion with the school on plans for further expansion, the school is understood to be supportive of expansion. Expansion is not expected to be required for several years.

9.2 The following points should be considered alongside the information provided above.

- It is the County Council’s experience that, with sufficient land and appropriate development, schools are rarely anything but supportive of expansion. Additional pupils create economies of scale and opportunities for a wider curriculum.
- Academy providers change, and academy leadership changes. It is not possible for absolute guarantees to be obtained. Further, some schools in the District are not expected to require expansion until 2023 or 2024. However, as noted above, schools generally welcome expansion.

- Whilst academies are not answerable to the County Council, the Department for Education does have a 'strong expectation' that all schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' should consider how they can support local authorities in providing school places. Schools not rated 'good' or 'outstanding' are still expected to expand where there is a critical basic need (for additional capacity), where other options have been explored and where there is a robust school improvement plan in place.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of strategic planning, future Ofsted grades cannot be taken into account, given their tendency to change. Schools graded as 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate' ought to be expected to improve. Equally, 'good' or 'outstanding' schools may suffer from a decline in performance. So at the Local Plan stage, schools cannot be discounted from expansion based on recent Ofsted performance.

- The Regional Schools Commissioner's office has indicated that they will support the local authority to find timely and appropriate ways of expanding academies and free schools in order to meet demands arising from growth. Following the examination hearings, this point was confirmed with the Regional Schools Commissioner's office on 07/10/2017.
- The County Council can compel maintained schools to expand. However, there is a reasonable expectation that many, if not most or all, maintained schools will convert to academies during the plan period.

9.3 In summary, the County Council is confident that the necessary additional school places required as a result of the plan can be delivered, but absolute confidence as to the intentions of academy providers to 2031 cannot be provided in any circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> See:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/504321/Making\\_significant\\_changes\\_to\\_an\\_open\\_academy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/504321/Making_significant_changes_to_an_open_academy.pdf)