

Cabinet

26 August 2025

Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Tracy Coombs, Portfolio Holder for Education

Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
(including statutory responsibility)

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Summary

This annual review shows areas of demand and makes recommendations to ensure that sufficient school places are available.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is requested to:
- 1.2. Note the progress made, which has ensured the Council has met its duty, and sufficient school places are available.
- 1.3. Recommend to Council the addition of the school projects marked as "new" listed in paragraph 9.2 to the education capital programme.
- 1.4. Recommend to Council the additional funding for the school projects marked as "additional funding" listed in paragraph 9.2.
- 1.5. Approve commencement of the design and tender processes for the projects listed in paragraph 9.2, which will follow the Council's Gateway procedures or approved funding agreements, at the appropriate time for each project.

- 1.6. Approve the change of designation of the remainder of the Cornwallis Avenue site, currently allocated as cemetery extension, for education use as set out in paragraph 8.6.
- 1.7. Approve the allocation of that land to the Maritime Academy Trust under a standard academy lease to be utilised for Danecourt secondary phase as set out in paragraph 8.7.
- 1.8. Approve a commitment to borrow up to £16.21 million to cover the potential shortfall in available funding, to create and establish a Danecourt Secondary School as set out in paragraphs 8.8 to 8.15.
- 1.9. Approve the current Inspire Academy site, when vacated, for use for The Beeches Free School, as set out in paragraph 8.16.
- 1.10. To authorise the Director of People to commence the relevant statutory processes required for expansions and new schools at the appropriate time, as set out in paragraph 9.2.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 2.1. Approving the recommendations in section 1 of the report will ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, and the most effective and appropriate use of public funds.

3. Budget and Policy Framework

- 3.1. Medway Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The School Place Planning Strategy describes the principles, methods, and challenges of this duty.
- 3.2. The proposals in this annual review follow the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. They also support the Council Plan sub-priority to “Ensure all children and young people access a high-quality, inclusive education.” Delivery of any approved proposals would be through available funding in the Education Capital Programme. Therefore, this is a matter for Cabinet. Any additions to the Capital Programme are a matter for full Council.
- 3.3. Cabinet approved the School Place Planning Strategy Principles in May 2022, as part of the School Place Planning Strategy. These guidelines ensure that changes are based upon improving schools and raising standards, so the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 3.4. On 27th March 2025 the Department for Education announced that Medway would receive £25,497,189 of Basic Need funding for the period 2026 to 2028. They also announced £4,837,957 of High Needs Provision Capital for 2025/26.

- 3.5. This report sets out plans to use these grants, along with any remaining funding rolled over from previous allocations, and s106 developer contributions.
- 3.6. The costs provided in this report are estimations based upon national benchmarking data and recent projects undertaken in Medway. They will be confirmed after progressing through the detailed design and procurement process. This may result in a need to transfer funding, through virements, between the project budgets when the finalised costs are known. Projects may also need to be re-prioritised until sufficient funding is available. Virements over £2 million will be brought to Council for agreement, those between £1 million and £2 million will be brought to Cabinet, and those up to £1 million will be brought to the Director of People for agreement.
- 3.7. Currently our estimated costs for the projects in this report, and those required from the local plan, are based around the following:
- 1 FE primary expansion £4-5 million
 - New 2 FE primary school £8-10 million
 - New 3 FE primary school £10-12 million
 - 1 FE secondary expansion £5-6 million
 - New 6 FE secondary school £40-45 million
 - New 8 FE secondary school £45-50 million
- 3.8. It is expected that there will be future capital funding from central government for mainstream and specialist provisions. However, at this time the levels and timings of future funding are unknown, and further reports will be presented for approval and the addition of projects to the programme at the relevant times to ensure that sufficient school places are maintained.
- 3.9. Members will be updated on project progress through future annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy.
- 3.10. In December 2024 the Government published a white paper on English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. It is likely that this will result in the creation of three or four unitary authorities in Kent, with populations of around 500,000. Currently, the statutory responsibility for planning and providing school places lies with Medway Council within Medway, and Kent County Council for Kent. This responsibility would pass to the new unitary authorities for their area upon their creation. Until any changes are confirmed, we will continue to plan provision under the existing boundaries.

4. Annual review

- 4.1. Annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy will highlight emerging need and propose actions and recommendations for providing sufficient school places. These proposals are based on the latest information, and analysis of local and national policy and strategy.

- 4.2. This annual review and the recommendations in it are based on the annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2025. Appendix 1 shows the forecasts for the mainstream primary and secondary planning areas.
- 4.3. The forecasts in this report only include the impact of housing developments with planning permission. As the local planning authority approves more housing schemes, future forecasts will reflect this, and demand for places will rise.
- 4.4. All local authorities aim to have a reasonable surplus of school places. This means that places are available for pupils who arrive during the school year, such as children moving into new housing. The nationally accepted level of surplus is 5%, to ensure places are available but without the risk of making schools unviable.

5. Medway overview

- 5.1. Medway's Local Plan shows the need for approximately 25,000 additional homes across Medway by 2041. Some of these already have permission, such as East Hill and Gibraltar Farm. It is likely that the adoption of the Local Plan in 2026 will increase the rate of housebuilding. In 2023 Medway's population stood at 286,800 and continues to grow. With the addition of the new houses it is expected that the population will increase further and significantly in excess of 300,000.
- 5.2. School place planning officers are working with planning and development colleagues on the Local Plan infrastructure delivery plan. Together, they are looking at the location and timing of new schools and expansions. This will continue to evolve during the development and implementation of the Local Plan.
- 5.3. There are other medium to large-sized developments which have started ahead of the local plan. This makes it harder to provide co-ordinated school expansions, as we are having to manage these in isolation, rather than holistically, and the land and financial contributions are not necessarily available to meet demand.

6. Primary actions

Peninsula

- 6.1. Forecasts for the Peninsula West planning area show that additional capacity will be needed to meet demand. This is due to a combination of increased births and people moving into the area. Both are related to the number of houses being built around Hoo. The immediate demand is for approximately one form of entry.
- 6.2. The proposed solution is to relocate the Marlborough Centre, for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), from Hoo St Werburgh Primary School to

the currently vacant and available building at Twydall Primary School. This would free up space within Hoo St Werburgh Primary School which could be repurposed for additional mainstream pupils. A large proportion of Marlborough Centre pupils come from the urban area of Medway, rather than on the peninsula and this will mean reduced journey times for those vulnerable pupils. The estimated cost is £6 million. This will comprise of refurbishments and adaptations at both Twydall Primary School and Hoo St Werburgh Primary School.

Gillingham and Rainham

- 6.3. Due to inward migration to the Gillingham planning area, forecasts show an increasing demand for places in Years 4 to 6. However, Reception, Year 1, Year 2, and to some extent Year 3 are expected to have surplus places. It may be possible for schools to use surplus space in lower year groups to take bulge classes in higher ones.
- 6.4. Some schools have requested to lower their Published Admission Numbers (PANs) in Year R due to lower numbers of applications. This will be managed to ensure that capacity remains available to meet future demand, or if the space is needed for the bulge classes noted above. Numbers will rise again in future as local plan housing developments come forward.

Chatham and Rochester

- 6.5. In the Chatham and Rochester planning areas there is demand due to inward migration to the area. This has increased numbers in some higher year groups. It is proposed to expand New Road Primary School, from a 1.5 form-of-entry (FE) school to 2 form-of-entry. This is estimated to cost £2.5 million.
- 6.6. In Chatham there is forecasted to be a peak in Year R in 2027. While this is over the PAN for that area, in Rochester there are expected to be a surplus of places. Therefore, taking the two areas together there is expected to be sufficient space in Year R.
- 6.7. As in Gillingham, there are forecasted to be some shortages in higher year groups in the Rochester and Chatham planning areas, and surpluses in lower year groups. It is expected that the two areas together will have sufficient space, but if required, schools could take bulge classes using the surplus places available in lower year groups.
- 6.8. Should it be required, there is an option to expand Greenvale Primary School from 1FE to 2FE. This currently is expected to cost approx. £4m. However, at this time no funding is available for this project.

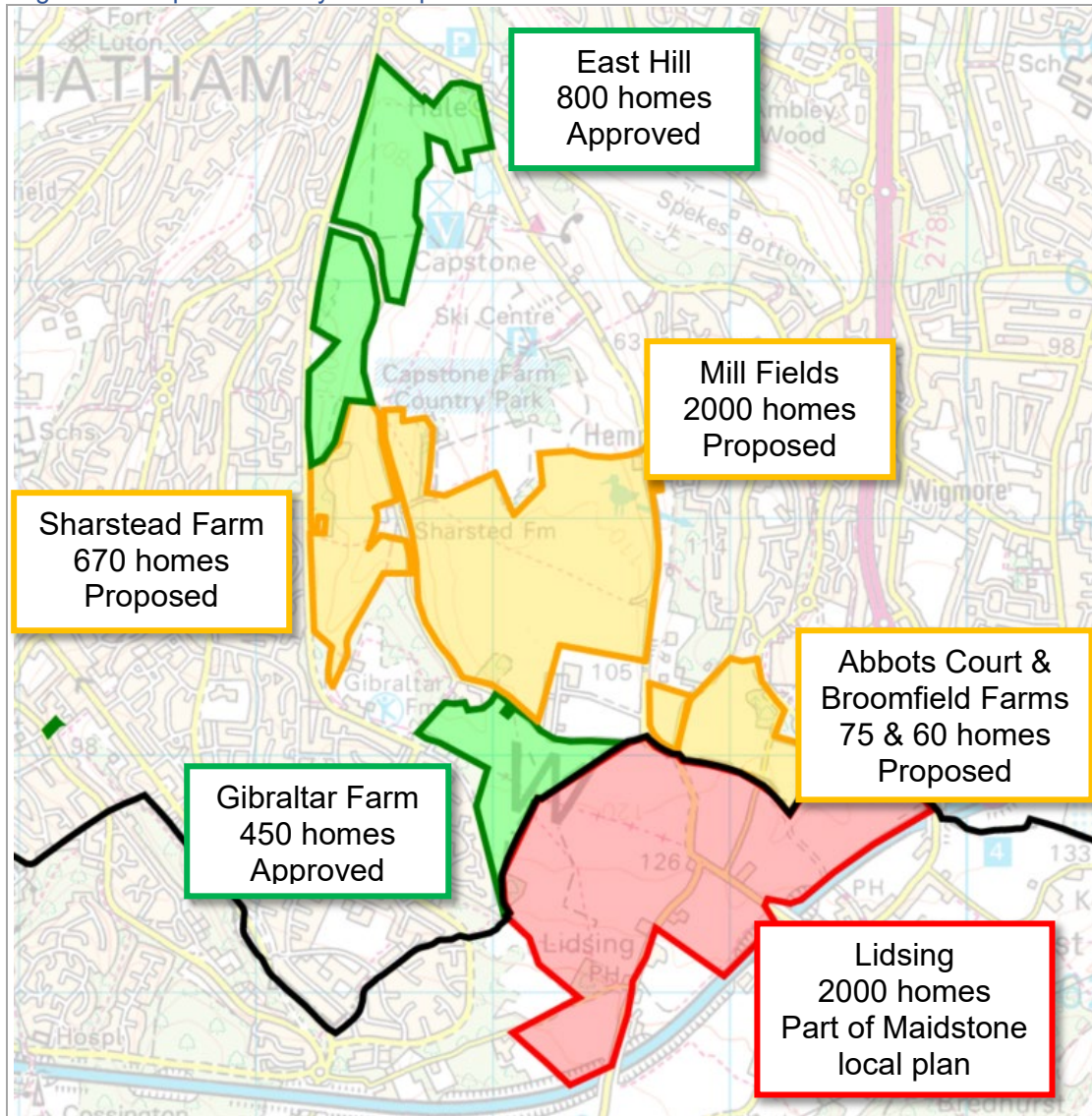
Capstone Valley developments

- 6.9. East Hill, an 800 home development in the northwest of the Capstone Valley, is under construction. This comes with land for a 2 FE primary school. At the

southern end of the valley is Gibraltar Farm, a 450 home development. Combined these will fill around 80% of a 2 FE primary. There are further developments planned for the Capstone Valley as indicated in the consultation for the local plan, which total approximately 3950 dwellings. This means that additional capacity other than this school will be needed in the area to provide for the pupils from these developments as it grows over the life of the local plan.

- 6.10. The East Hill development comes with land for a primary school, but insufficient funding was available to build a new school. It was originally proposed to expand Kingfisher Primary School. However, a feasibility study found that, due to the ground levels at the site, this would not be an efficient use of the available funding. Now that the recently allocated basic need funding is available, along with developer contributions, building a new school is the preferred option. This will include a resourced provision with places for 20 pupils. This is estimated to cost a total of £10 million.
- 6.11. We are expecting to receive £4.2m of s106 contributions from the East Hill and Gibraltar Farm developments over time as they are built out. These contributions could then be used to replace the basic need funding used, freeing it up for other future projects.
- 6.12. South of the Gibraltar Farm development, across the boundary in the Maidstone Borough Council area, will be a 2,000-home development at Lidsing. This will come with a 3FE primary school, but the timing of this provision may mean additional pupils coming to Medway in the early phases of the development. It may also have an impact on the pattern of school preferences in the area. Officers are in discussions with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to ensure that sufficient provision is made at the right time so as not to impact on Medway.

Figure 1 – Capstone Valley Developments



Local plan – primary school provision

6.13. The housing developments expected to come forward under the local plan will require additional school capacity. The current plan for new school places offers the following options:

- Peninsula
 - Chattenden expanded by 1 FE and relocated
 - High Halstow expanded by 1 FE and relocated
 - Either one New 3 FE or two new 2 FE schools
- Chatham and Rochester
 - Greenvale expansion by 1 FE if required
- Walderslade (Capstone Valley)
 - New 3 FE school
 - One new 2 FE school
 - One new 1 FE school with 2 FE core facilities
 - Lordswood expanded by 1 FE if required

- Kingfisher expanded by 1 FE if required
 - Assumes Lidsing development provides a 3 FE primary school
- Strood
 - Two New 2 FE schools
 - Temple Mill expansion by 1 FE
 - Land south of Rochester Road one new 1 or 2 FE school
- Gillingham
 - 2 FE TBC
- Rainham
 - Riverside Primary School expansion by 1 FE

6.14. The actual number of places required will depend on the phasing of the developments. Education officers have been working with planning colleagues to produce the infrastructure delivery plan. This will set out the expected number and timing of schools to meet expected demand.

6.15. The main challenges in providing these new and expanded schools are finding sufficient funding and land. These new primary schools and expansions could cost between £94 and £114 million. Timing is also an important consideration. The new places will need to be available for when pupils move into the area, but not too far in advance, as empty schools will be financially unviable. While funding will generally come from s106 agreements, these contributions are generally paid as certain numbers of occupations are reached. Therefore, the funding for the schools will not always be available in advance of the pupils moving in.

7. Secondary actions

Secondary non-selective

7.1. Due to inward migration, there are forecasted to be insufficient secondary places for the expected numbers of pupils. This will require action at several schools to provide additional places.

7.2. Initially it is proposed to provide an extra classroom block at Strood Academy. This will allow the school to increase capacity permanently by 2 forms-of-entry. It is estimated to cost £6m.

7.3. A further option to expand non-selective provision is available at Brompton Academy. This is subject to further funding becoming available.

7.4. These are in addition to the currently planned bulge classes (B) and permanent expansions (P) shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Bulge class and expansion plan

2024 /2025	2025 /2026	2026 /2027	2027 /2028	2028 /2029	2029 /2030
Maritime (60 places) (B)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)
Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)
Robert Napier (B)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)
Howard Year 8 (B)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)
Waterfront UTC Year 9 (B)	Thomas Aveling (B)	Thomas Aveling (B)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Maritime (B)	
			TBC (B)	TBC (B)	
		Strood Academy (60 places) (P)	Strood Academy (60 places) (P)	Strood Academy (60 places) (P)	Strood Academy (60 places) (P)

Secondary selective

- 7.5. From September 2026, Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar will start taking both boys and girls in Year 7. This change, in conjunction with changes to the Medway test, will increase the number of Medway pupils attending a selective school. This will help to ease pressure on non-selective school places. It is likely that the full impact of this will take some time to fully develop, and forecasts will be monitored.
- 7.6. Under decision 54/2023 the Council approved £2.7m of funding to enable Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar to adapt their buildings as part of the co-ed changes. Since that approval in 2023, escalating construction costs means that this level of funding is no longer sufficient. It is recommended that an additional £0.5m of basic need funding is added to the capital programme and split between the three schools as set out in Table 2 and this forms part of recommendation 1.4.
- 7.7. Increasing secondary age pupils means that additional spaces will also be needed at selective schools. Over time, and as part of the local plan infrastructure delivery plan, it is estimated that an additional six forms of entry will be required. It is recommended that this process will need to be

phased in line with available funding. At this stage it is proposed to add additional capacity at Fort Pitt Grammar. This will allow the school to take an additional one form-of-entry. This is estimated to cost £5 million.

Local plan – secondary school provision

- 7.8. As with primary schools, the local plan will also produce demand for additional secondary school places. The current plan expectation is for:
- Non-selective (all with potential to expand if required in future)
 - One 6/8FE school in Capstone Valley
 - One 8FE school in Strood (for Medway and Gravesham)
 - One 6/8FE school on Peninsula
 - Selective
 - Either: six 1 FE phased expansions
 - Or: One satellite 6 FE school on Peninsula or in Strood
- 7.9. As noted in paragraph 6.14 above, the challenges in providing these new school places are finding sufficient funding and land, as well as timing the new provision to meet demand. These new secondary schools and expansions could cost between £170 and £195 million.
- 7.10. While the Lidsing development, on the Maidstone side of the boundary in the Capstone Valley, comes with a primary school, secondary pupils are expected to come to Medway. Therefore, Maidstone Borough Council will provide the secondary school part of the developer contribution to Medway Council. This will be combined with contributions from the other developments in the Capstone Valley to go towards providing a new secondary school. However, as these agreed developments will only provide a total of approximately £12million, there will be a shortfall of around £28-£33m for this school.
8. SEND actions
- 8.1. It is expected that there will be a shortfall of secondary and post-16 places for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). It is proposed to expand Danecourt to add a secondary phase. This will ease pressure on secondary and post-16 places and free-up places at Abbey Court and Bradfields. The building is estimated to cost between £20 and £25 million, and a site will be needed for this.
- 8.2. Part of the empty land at Cornwallis Avenue has been allocated as a new site for Inspire Academy under decision 85/2019 and is being leased to the DfE for this purpose. The total Cornwallis site area is 3.35ha. In 2019, Bereavement and Registration Services identified that 1.75ha would be required to ensure sufficient burial space for the next 100 years and beyond. This left approximately 1.60ha which Cabinet agreed to being leased for school use.

- 8.3. However, local and national attitudes towards burial are almost certain to change over the next 100 years. Options for 'lift and deepen', increasing ground levels, re-using grave space, and increasing cremations, will mitigate towards the reduction in local authority cemetery capacity.
- 8.4. In contrast, demand for school places in Medway continues to rise across all sectors of the education system. Using the remaining area of the Cornwallis Avenue land for education will help the local authority meet its statutory duty to provide school places. There are limited alternative options across Medway for school sites.
- 8.5. Discussions with Members, the Portfolio Holder, and Leader of the Council, show a preference to allocate the site for education. There is an immediate need for additional school places, while the need for a cemetery extension in the long-term future is only a possibility.
- 8.6. Therefore, as Danecourt secondary phase is a priority, it is recommended that the remaining Cornwallis land is designated as education land (recommendation 1.6).
- 8.7. In conjunction, it is also recommended that that land is allocated to Maritime Academy Trust to be leased for Danecourt Secondary, under a standard academy lease, which would be co-terminus with the current Danecourt site, which has 115 years remaining (recommendation 1.7).
- 8.8. The addition of a Danecourt secondary school is a high priority project for Medway. This will create an additional 200 SEND places which will significantly reduce the need to place children in expensive independent and out of area provision in future years.
- 8.9. Therefore, to enable the building of a Danecourt secondary school, it is recommended that the council commits to borrow up to £16.21 million, as per recommendation 1.8. Future SEND grant allocations and appropriate s106 contributions could potentially reduce the shortfall in available funding. It would be reasonable to expect that over the course of the next five years some additional SEND grant funding will be made available. This would delay, reduce or even remove the need to borrow. Current expectations envisage that no borrowing would be necessary until at least 2028.
- 8.10. The cost of borrowing £16.21 million over 50 years is currently estimated to be £1,011,246 per annum, or £50,262,293 in total. If additional High Needs grant funding becomes available and reduces the borrowing to £10 million, the cost would be £623,841 per year, or £31,192,038. If the need to borrow reduces to £5 million, the cost would be £311,920 per year, or £15,596,019 in total.
- 8.11. Secondary EHCP numbers are expected to rise by 600 over the next five years; currently 420 pupils are placed in independent schools in and outside of Medway at an annual cost of £21.8m. Without extra capacity the majority of additional pupils will need to be placed in expensive out-of-area and independent provision, with costly and distant home-to-school transport.

- 8.12. Additional places over time at Rivermead (60) from 2025, at Inspire (70) from 2027 will go some way towards easing the pressure, as will the 75 places at the Leigh Academy, Victory Academy, and Chatham Grammar School specialist resourced provisions (SRP). However, it is clear that additional in-house capacity will be required to reduce as much as possible the numbers of pupils placed in out-of-area and independent settings. The proposed expansion into secondary provision at Danecourt will provide around 200 places and also, over time, free up approximately 150 places at Bradfields and Abbey Court, creating 350 places in total.
- 8.13. Placing 350 pupils in-house would cost £6.3m per year in pupil funding. If those pupils were placed externally the costs would exceed £18m per year. Taking the proposed Danecourt expansion forward results in future cost avoidance of around £12m per year when the provisions are full. Placing 350 pupils per year in-house, rather than out-of-area, over a five year period would result in a cumulative cost-avoidance equivalent to the total cost of borrowing.
- 8.14. Whilst these proposals do not solve the entire conundrum of where to place pupils, without them the costs to place out-of-area would continue to rise year-on-year towards more than doubling the current costs of £21m.
- 8.15. This action also protects the Council against future price increases at independent provision, keeps children and young people local to their homes, families and peers, and enables better engagement by parents with their children's schools. The additional benefit of less time travelling to and from school should also not be underestimated.
- 8.16. The Beeches free school, which is in the pre-opening phase, requires a site. It is recommended that, subject to agreement by the DfE to change the designation of the school to provide for primary SEMH pupils, this is located on the current Inspire Academy site when they vacate (recommendation 1.9). This is expected to occur in 2027.
- 8.17. Currently there are no resourced provisions at selective schools, which limits options for pupils who pass the Medway Test and have special educational needs. It is proposed to add a resourced provision at Chatham Grammar School, to open in September 2026. This will provide up to 30 spaces for pupils with ASD who have passed the Medway Test. This is estimated to cost £2.75 million.
- 8.18. A second resourced provision at a grammar school is being sought and it is targeted to open in 2028/9 subject to available funding.
- 8.19. As noted in paragraph 6.2, it is proposed to relocate the Marlborough Centre to use the space for mainstream pupils at Hoo St Werburgh. The Centre will then be re-provided in the currently vacant buildings at Twydall Primary School. This site is located centrally in Medway and closer to the main urban areas where most pupils live. This could be an opportunity to enlarge the provision.

- 8.20. A resourced provision was approved at Leigh Academy Rainham on 4 April 2023 under decision number 54/2023, with an initial estimated cost of £2.3m. Now that costs have been confirmed this will require an additional £0.3 million due to cost escalation and site challenges. This forms part of recommendation 1.4.
- 8.21. It is proposed to add a resourced provision to Napier Primary School, for pupils with ASD/SLCN (Speech, Language, and Communication Needs). This is estimated to cost £150k, and would take effect from Easter 2026. This forms part of recommendation 1.3.
- 8.22. Resourced provisions for ASD are also proposed at St Margaret's Juniors School and All Saints Primary School. They are estimated to cost £150k each, but will be subject to sufficient funding being available. These form part of recommendation 1.3.

Local plan – SEND provision

- 8.23. The increase in pupil numbers through the local plan will come with a corresponding increase in children and young people requiring some form of SEND provision. This demand will be met through a combination of:
- Support at mainstream schools
 - Resourced provisions at mainstream schools
 - Additional special school places
- 8.24. It is challenging, at this stage, to plan for long term SEND provision, as there is great uncertainty about the future diagnoses and the needs and quantum of pupils.
- 8.25. However, all new schools and some expansions at existing schools will include a new resourced provision. This will, over time, provide an additional 250-300 places.
- 8.26. As noted in paragraph 8.8, The Beeches free school is in the pre-opening phase. This was approved in wave 12 of the Government free school programme. There have been delays in the process and we are awaiting further decisions from the DfE.

9. Project summary

- 9.1. The following table (Table 2) lists the proposed projects, which will be funded using the basic need and high needs allocations described in paragraph 3.4. Cabinet is asked to recommend these projects are added to the education capital programme (recommendations 1.3 and 1.4), and to approve the commencement of the design and tender processes as appropriate (recommendation 1.5):

- 9.2. The Cabinet is asked to authorise the Director of People to commence the relevant statutory processes required for these expansions and new schools at the appropriate time (recommendation 1.9)

Table 2 - Project summary

Project	Target date (Sept)	Places	Estimated cost	Basic Need funding	High Needs funding	Report paragraph
Total funding available				£25.70m	£12.29m	
Hoo St Werburgh expansion / Marlborough Centre relocation (new)	2027/2026	210/30	£6m	£6m		6.2,8.19
Strood Academy expansion (new)	2026	300	£6m	£6m		7.2
Danecourt secondary phase* (new)	2028	250	£25m		£25m	8.1
Co-ed adaptations (additional funding) at:						
Chatham Grammar	2026	-	£0.165m	£0.165m		7.5
Fort Pitt Grammar	2026	-	£0.170m	£0.170m		7.5
Holcombe Grammar	2026	-	£0.165m	£0.165m		7.5
Napier Primary School resourced provision for ASD/SLCN (new)	2026	20	£0.15m		£0.15m	8.21
Chatham Grammar resourced provision (new)	2026	30	£2.75m		£2.75m	8.17
Leigh Academy Rainham resourced provision (additional funding)	2026	30	£0.3m		£0.3m	8.20
East Hill Primary school & resourced provision (new)	2029	420	£10m	£10m		6.10
New Road expansion(new)	2030	105	£3m	£3m		6.5
St Margaret's Junior School ASD resourced provision (New)	2026	20	£0.15m		£0.15m	8.22
All Saints Primary School ASD resourced provision (New)	2026	20	£0.15m		£0.15m	8.22
Total			£60.0m	£25.5m	£28.5m	
Remaining funding				£0.2m	(£16.21m)	

*Danecourt is a high priority project with insufficient funding. Whilst additional SEND funding may be forthcoming in future years, a commitment to additional borrowing is required to facilitate this project (see paragraph 8.9 to 8.15)

- 9.3. Table 3 sets out additional projects which will be required, but there is not currently sufficient funding. Approval for these projects will be requested as funding becomes available.

- 9.4. These are all in advance of the projects required from the local plan and are required to meet known and short-term need. Additional projects, as indicated in paragraphs 6.12, 7.8, and 8.23, will need to be added to the programme throughout the lifetime of the local plan to ensure that sufficient school places are maintained.

Table 3 - Future projects – subject to additional funding becoming available

	Target date (Sept)	Places	Estimated cost	Basic Need funding	High Needs funding	Report paragraph
Brompton Academy (new)	2027	150	£6m	£6m		7.3
Greenvale (new)	2032	210	£4m	£4m		6.8
Fort Pitt expansion (new)	2030	150	£5m	£5m		7.7
Resourced provision at a selective school TBC	2030	25	£2.75m		£2.75m	
Total			£17.75m	£15m	£2.75m	

10. Condition Programme

- 10.1. Local authorities have responsibility for the condition of maintained schools, to ensure that they are safe, warm, dry, and provide secure learning environments. The DfE fund the condition programme through an annual grant (Table 3). However, as the number of maintained schools falls and the cost of maintenance increases, the grant allows for less work.

Table 4 - School Condition Allocations.

Financial year	School Condition Grant	Maintained schools	Academies
2017/18	£1,466,745	43	61
2018/19	£1,016,147	33	70
2019/20	£1,016,147	32	71
2020/21	£901,891	31	72
2021/22	£901,891	31	72
2022/23	£775,901	27	74
2023/24	£774,589	27	74
2024/25	£608,453	27	74
2025/26	£775,464	21	82

This is causing significant issues in school maintenance. The amount of funding available restricts the condition programme. Projects must be prioritised, causing delays of 2-3 years. Therefore, the school estate is deteriorating. There is a risk that academy conversions will reduce funding allocations further, making school maintenance challenging. Officers have highlighted this to the DfE directly, and it has also been raised through the regional and national meetings of the Education Building Development Officers Group (EBDOG).

11. Academy Conversion Progress

- 11.1. Medway's first academies opened in 2009 under the original academy programme. From 2010 schools were able to convert to academy status either by choice, or because the DfE directed them to.

- 11.2. There are currently 21 LA maintained schools, and 82 academies (shown in Table 4). There are currently two further schools converting to academies in September 2025. With other schools expected to convert over the coming two years, it is likely that by the end of 2026 or early 2027 there will be a maximum of 15 local authority-maintained schools remaining.

Table 5 - Number of schools by type.

	Maintained	Academy
Primary	19	57
All-through		1
Secondary	1	18
Special	1	4
Alternative Provision		2
Overall	21	82

12. Risk Management

- 12.1. The table below shows the risks of not implementing the recommendations from this report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places	If insufficient school places are available to meet demand, the Council would not meet its obligations.	Implement proposals to provide places in the areas of demand.	C2
That insufficient funding is available to fund proposals to provide sufficient places.	Limited basic need funding is available. The extent of the emerging need may mean that without more funding, the Council may not be able to implement projects to provide places. This could mean that the council does not meet its statutory obligation. The strategy refers to s106 contributions not yet agreed through the planning process.	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.	A2
That the level of forecast pupils does not materialise	If the expected numbers of pupils do not materialise, then the Council could have spent the funding elsewhere.	Continue to track births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting.	C3

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
That the level of inward migration exceeds forecasts	If inward migration continues at unexpected and unprecedented levels, there will be pressure placed on areas of Medway to provide further places to meet demand	Continue to track births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting and start discussions with schools around school expansion or bulge classes.	C2
Applications for Free Schools increases	Applications for Free Schools could be a risk to strategic planning framework as the Council has less control over the location or who applies.	Monitor all applications to Secretary of State, and work with DfE to influence outcomes of applications to suit, and fit in with, the Council's wider pupil place planning strategy.	C3
Other Local Authorities placing children in Medway	Other authorities are placing children into Medway schools, including unaccompanied asylum seekers, which adds pressure to the system and is difficult to plan for.	Retain a certain level of flexibility within the system to meet unexpected inward movement of children requiring a school place.	B3

Likelihood	Impact
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

13. Consultation

13.1. This report does not require any consultation, but any proposals resulting from this report will include a consultation process, if necessary.

13.2. This report does not include a Diversity Impact Assessment. Individual proposals brought forward from this report will include assessments.

14. Climate change implications

14.1. This report has no direct climate change implications. However, when any project is progressed, the design and construction methods will look to make a positive contribution to the council's climate change agenda.

- 14.2. Creating local provision for children and young people can reduce car journeys across Medway which would have a positive impact on air quality.
- 14.3. Schools encourage pupils to walk or cycle to school, and this becomes more achievable if the provision is local.
- 14.4. Officers aim to reduce the carbon footprint of the school maintenance and condition programme and school expansion or building projects. Examples include greener heating systems, LED lighting, improved insulation, photovoltaics, vehicle chargers, and using local contractors where possible.

15. Financial implications

- 15.1. Funding for projects in this report will come from Children and Adults' Capital Programme. Procurement Board reports will request funding approval for each individual project.
- 15.2. We will request developer contributions from new housing schemes to fund new school places. We will consider Local Plan developments together to decide the most efficient use of developer contributions or developer provided schools.
- 15.3. There is currently £118,432 in Basic Need funding available from previous allocations, which has already been added to the capital programme and £93,994 from the 2025/26 allocation. The 2026/27 and 2027/28 allocations will not be available until those financial years. This provides a total of £25,709,615 available funding for the proposed programme.
- 15.4. These allocations are based on the shortfall between forecasted pupil numbers and school places provided through the annual SCAP return.

Table 6 - Basic Need allocations

Funding Year	Amount of Basic Need
Carried over	£118,432
2024/25	£0
2025/26	£93,994
2026/27	£15,601,427
2027/28	£9,895,762

- 15.5. There is currently £7,449,345 of SEND funding available from previous allocations, including Safety Valve Intervention funding. The allocation for 2025/26 is £4,837,957. This provides a total of £12,287,302.
- 15.6. Officers will fund the proposed projects using the most suitable combination of basic need, SEND grant funding and developer contributions. However, there is insufficient funding available for the proposed project at Danecourt secondary of approximately £15 million. This is a high priority project and it is therefore recommended that the Council commits to borrowing to fund this, to advance the benefits as set out in paragraphs 8.8 and 8.15. Future SEND grant allocations could potentially reduce or remove the shortfall in available

funding, and consequently reduce the final amount the council may need to borrow.

- 15.7. As s106 contributions are paid in instalments, there can be a delay in receiving the full contribution for a development. Therefore, in some cases it may be necessary to borrow in advance of these payments being received. This will only be considered where there is a high likelihood of the contribution being received.
- 15.8. Guidance from the Department for Education on securing developer contributions for education highlights the role that local authority borrowing powers can play in providing up front funding of for education in relation to s106. It states that “To support the delivery of strategic development at pace, you may need to forward-fund school provision within an urban extension or new settlement, using basic need funding or local authority borrowing if necessary and recouping these costs later through developer contributions secured by a planning obligation”.
- 15.9. The table below shows the received and agreed Education Section 106 funding. Officers will use this funding towards creating places to meet demand. The Council receives S106 receipts in instalments as a development reaches trigger points. This can make it challenging to plan too far ahead. Education officers work closely with planning officers to understand the phasing and progress of the various developments to help with place planning.
- 15.10. An additional £23.6 million has been requested against housing schemes not yet approved through the planning process. Not all of these developments will be approved, so this is a maximum figure.

Table 7 - Amounts of s106 funding

	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Total
1. Agreed s106 funding	£5,444,402.26	£13,408,113.57	£15,763,339.30	£34,615,855.13
2. Received funding	£3,199,195.46	£8,442,778.20	£7,001,869.35	£18,643,843.01
3. Spent funding	£2,327,259.02	£6,251,913.14	£8,213,626.06	£16,792,798.22
4. Available (incl borrowing, =row 3 - row 2)	£871,936.43	£2,190,865.07	£-1,211,756.71	£1,851,044.79
5. Available (excl borrowing)	£988,996.89	£2,435,191.58	£1,585,453.68	£5,009,642.15
6. To come (development not started)	£2,495,048.06	£5,810,644.01	£6,930,089.66	£15,235,781.73
7. To come (development started)	£83,913.59	£347,976.72	£2,638,202.10	£3,070,092.41
8. To come (total, =row 6 + row 7)	£2,578,961.65	£6,158,620.73	£9,568,291.76	£18,305,874.14
Total available in future (=row 4 + row 8)	£3,450,898.08	£8,349,485.80	£8,356,535.05	£20,156,918.93

15.11. Occasionally, other funding sources and initiatives become available such as targeted basic need initiatives. Where possible the Council will look to make use of those opportunities to reduce the demands upon the limited funding available.

15.12. The previous government's Free School programme offered an opportunity to create new provision without the responsibility for funding. The funding waves announced under this programme were separate from the Free School presumption process, where the Council funds new schools from housing developments. It is not expected that any future Free School waves will be announced, but officers will explore any alternatives.

15.13. For the most recent Basic Need allocations, Medway was funded at a rate of £21,927.75 (primary) and £28,174.61 (secondary) per pupil. The rate in the Medway guide for Developer Contributions is £16,758.85 (expansion), £21,451.33 (new) per primary pupil, and £18,869.58 (expansion), £24,153.00 (new) per secondary pupil.

15.14. However, the cost to build a 2 FE primary school (420) pupils in Medway is estimated at £8-10 million. This equates to £23,809.52 per pupil. The DfE scorecard figure for the South East (Appendix 4), is £27,590 per pupil, or £11.6 million in total. The cost of a 6 FE secondary school (1050 pupils in total) is estimated at up to £45 million. This equates to £42,857.14 per pupil.

The DfE scorecard average for the South East is £33,424 per pupil, or £35 million in total.

- 15.15. Therefore, neither the Basic Need nor the s106 contribution rates provide sufficient funding to construct a new school. The challenge is providing places within the funding available.

16. Legal implications

- 16.1. The Council has the power under sections 18 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make “prescribed alterations” to a maintained school. The procedure for making prescribed alterations is set out in ‘School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 16.2. There is a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties to develop their proposals prior to formal publication. This is part of their duty, under public law, to act rationally and consider all relevant factors. Specific proposals brought forward from this report will go through this consultation process.
- 16.3. For expansions at academies, the academy trust must carry out the statutory consultation. In these circumstances the Regional Schools Director is the decision maker on the proposals. If these proposals are to meet basic need for school places, then responsibility for funding falls to the Council. All decisions on funding approval will follow the Council’s procurement procedures.
- 16.4. DfE guidance states that Basic Need allocations do not factor in the cost of land acquisition, so it is particularly important that any land required within larger development sites for schools is provided at no cost to the local authority wherever possible.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Mainstream Forecasts
- Appendix 2 – SEND Forecasts
- Appendix 3 – Project progress
- Appendix 4 – DfE Scorecards

Background papers

[School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27](#)