



2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025

Cllr Andrew Stringer  
Cabinet Member for Planning  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
By email

Ms D O'Rourke  
Director of Place  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
By email

Dear Cllr Stringer and Ms O'Rourke,

**Re: Strategic Housing Development and Primary School Capacity in Mid Suffolk**

I am writing on behalf of All Saints Schools Trust, a Multi Academy Trust comprising 15 primary schools across Suffolk, to request that the Council take into account the distribution and capacity of local primary schools—particularly those with available places and the potential for expansion—when determining the location of the additional housing required under the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024.

The availability of accessible, high-quality education is a key factor in building sustainable and successful communities. Many of our Trust's primary schools currently have surplus places, and a number of them have the capacity to expand further on their existing sites. Locating new housing developments near such schools represents a practical, cost-effective, and community-focused approach to planning.

In addition, a recent review of demographic trends across the county highlights a continuing decline in the birth rate, which is expected to reduce pupil numbers at primary schools across the region in the coming years. This shift has significant implications for school viability and community infrastructure. Targeting new housing near existing schools with surplus capacity offers a strategic opportunity to mitigate the effects of falling rolls, support school sustainability, and ensure that educational facilities remain integral to their communities.

In this context, we would also like to stress the importance of ensuring an appropriate housing mix within new developments. To support school sustainability and build vibrant, long-term communities, it is vital that the mix of housing includes a sufficient proportion of homes that are both affordable and market affordable, which are attractive to families with young children or those just starting on their home ownership journey. Without this focus, there is a risk that new developments may not generate the pupil numbers needed to sustain local schools. Ensuring that the right type of housing is built, such as two- and three-bedroom homes suitable for young families, will play a crucial role in aligning housing growth with educational and community infrastructure.

We would therefore encourage the District Council to give priority to areas where primary schools—both within our Trust and more broadly—can support the anticipated growth in pupil numbers that new housing will generate. This approach would:

- Make effective use of existing school infrastructure.
- Support balanced and well-served communities.
- Reduce the need for costly new school provision where existing capacity is under-utilised.
- Help maintain the viability and vitality of schools currently experiencing falling rolls.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the work the District Council's strategic planning team will be undertaking to identify areas of strategic alignment and help ensure that new development is matched by appropriate and sustainable educational provision. More urgently we are keen to engage with officers on any upcoming major planning applications to help provide information on the current capacity at any of our Mid Suffolk schools and how new development could support the number on roll at:

- Eye
- Fressingfield
- Laxfield
- Occold
- Stradbroke
- Thorndon
- Wortham

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to continuing to support the communities we serve, alongside the District Council, in planning for a thriving future.

Yours sincerely,

*Melanie Barrow*

Mrs Melanie Barrow  
Chief Executive Officer

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Cc:

CLlr Lucy Elkin  
CLlr Lavinia Hadingham  
CLlr Anders Linder  
CLlr Roland Warboys

Eye Town Council  
Fressingfield Parish Council  
Laxfield Parish Council  
Occold Parish Council  
Stradbroke Parish Council  
Thorndon Parish Council  
Wortham Parish Council