

Castle Point Borough Council Housing Scenario Test

Primary and Secondary Education

November 2025

Background

Essex County Council's (ECC) School Place Planning team has been working with Castle Point Borough Council (CPBC) to assist in the preparation of their Local Plan and ensure sufficient school places are provided, arising from new development, over the Plan period. This Scenario Test is based on a spatial scenario provided by CPBC for assessment on 30/10/2025. It has been carried out in accordance with [Local and Neighbourhood Planners Guide to School Organisation \(2025\)](#)

The scenario provided by CPBC includes a total of 5,780 homes of which 832 were qualifying houses and 3,908 were qualifying flats, with the rest being 'discounted units' (as defined in ECC's [Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions \(Revised 2024\)](#)). This mix reflects CPBC's housing strategy, which is to concentrate development in urban areas and require greater site densities. Any homes already built on relevant sites as of October 2025 are not included in these figures to avoid double counting pupils that may already be on roll at local schools (May 2025 numbers on roll used). The sites were matched to their 'nearest' schools using ArcGIS. Phasing information was not used, as this test considers only the full long-term impact of the growth scenario. Further assessment will be undertaken to support individual planning applications once the developer has determined the detailed housing mix.

Assessment

In the text below, reference is made to Forms of Entry (fe) i.e. the number of classes of thirty pupils in each year group. A 2fe primary school would thereby have space for 420 pupils in total (2 classes x 30 pupils x 7 year groups) and a 6fe secondary school with no sixth form would have space for 900 pupils in total (6 classes x 30 pupils x 5 year groups).

The scenario has been assessed using ECC's standard per dwelling pupil product factors as set out in the [Local and Neighbourhood Planners Guide to School Organisation](#) (February 2025):

Age Range	Qualifying House	Qualifying Flat
Primary	0.3	0.15
Secondary	0.2	0.1

It should be noted that these factors are based on average demand. Starting with younger cohorts, actual numbers generally peak at higher levels for a period after new homes are first occupied.

Analysis is by geographical 'school planning groups' that are agreed with the Department for Education as part of the annual School Capacity Survey (SCAP). Each site in the scenario test has been matched to its closest primary and secondary school. Minor adjustments are made, where appropriate, to aid analysis and reflect geographical constraints. The schools in each

planning group are listed in ECC's [Ten Year Plan](#): 'Meeting the demand for mainstream school places in Essex'.

The pupil numbers on roll (NOR) used are from the May 2025 School Census, which was the closest date to the base date used in the housing figures that were provided. The pupil forecasts were also produced in May 2025 but use GP registration data provided by the DfE in October 2024. These forecasts exclude pupils from new housing so as not to double count. School capacity is based on the Published Admission Numbers for September 2026 i.e. the number of places each school is expected to offer for the 2026/27 academic year in Reception (primary) or Year 7 (secondary).

As alluded to above, the scenario test seeks to assess the infrastructure requirements for the end of the Local Plan period. The children entering schools at this point are yet to be born. The baseline level of demand can thereby only be estimated using current numbers and forecasts. The following measures have thus been applied to assess the likely surplus / deficit in provision:

1. How much space do we have / need based on current numbers on roll plus the new housing but retaining 5%* of the current capacity unfilled?
2. What is the surplus / deficit including all the housing at the highest point of underlying demand shown in the forecasts (no unfilled capacity retained)?
3. How much space is forecast by 2035/36 (the end of ECC's ten-year forecast period) but retaining 5%* of the current capacity unfilled?

** Figure recommended by the Audit Commission.*

The first of these measures, using actual pupil numbers, is the least open to challenge but can overstate the impact of new housing if there are areas where the target of 5% unfilled places is not currently met. The second measure provides a robust figure to work to, as long as cohort sizes do not become more volatile. Since accuracy generally diminishes as the forecast horizon increases, the final measure is the least certain. However, birth rates have fallen significantly in recent years and if these rates become the 'new normal' the other two measures risk overstating the need for additional school places.

The 'truth' is likely to sit within the range of need indicated by the three measures. The responses suggested below, thereby generally, address approximate mid-points, adjusted to reflect officer knowledge of local geography and wider education considerations. It is important that some contingency options are retained, rather than maximising every school's expansion potential.

Scenario test results

Primary

Area	Total pupils from new housing	Pupils from new housing (FE)	Published Admission Number (2026)	May 2025 Reception Number on Roll (NOR)	2025 No Housing Forecast		Surplus Places After Housing		
					Peak Reception Size	2035/36 Reception	Using NOR but keeping 5% of capacity unfilled	Based on Peak Demand (all capacity filled)	2035/36 Demand keeping 5% of capacity unfilled
Castle Point Primary A: North (Thundersley)	338	1.6	510	490	483	461	-1.8	-0.7	-0.8
Castle Point Primary B: South (Canvey)	498	2.4	390	343	362	323	-1.5	-1.4	-0.8
Grand Total	836	4.0	900	833	845	784	-3.2	-2.1	-1.6

Negative figures in the final three columns suggest a potential deficit in provision.

Castle Point Primary A: North (Thundersley)

The scenario is likely to generate around 1.6fe of new demand in this area, of which around a form of entry would be unmet without action. Kents Hill Infant reduced their PAN by 30 and can go back up

from 60 to 90 when required to meet this need. Thundersley Primary is in the right location for the largest proportion of proposed housing and have a large site that could probably facilitate expansion of the school by 1fe each (feasibility work required to confirm).

Castle Point Primary B: South (Canvey):

The scenario generates a higher estimated level of new demand in this area (2.4fe) than in Group A. However, unmet need is estimated to be similar by the end of the period. Based on the location of the proposed housing, Northwick Park would see the greatest impact. The school currently has a Published Admission Number of 60 (reflected in the table above) but has operated as a 3fe school rather than a 2fe. Canvey I&J and Winter Gardens probably have sufficient land to expand if required.

Secondary

Area	Total pupils from new housing	Pupils from new housing (FE)	Published Admission Number (2026)	May 2025 Year 7 Number on Roll (NOR)	2025 No Housing Forecast		Surplus Places After Housing		
					Peak Year 7 Size	2035/36 Year 7	Using NOR but keeping 5% of capacity unfilled	Based on Peak Demand	2035/36 Demand keeping 5% of capacity unfilled
Castle Point Secondary A: North (Benfleet)	225	1.5	740	762	770	586	-3.5	-2.5	2.4
Castle Point Secondary B: South (Canvey)	332	2.2	420	368	358	257	-1.2	-0.1	2.5
Grand Total	557	3.7	1160	1130	1128	843	-4.6	-2.6	4.9

Negative figures in the final three columns suggest a potential deficit in provision.

Castle Point Secondary Group A: North (Benfleet):

This area is a significant net importer of pupils, with a GP registrations to NOR conversion rate averaging 114%. Whilst 90% of pupils living in the area (including 6th form) also attend Group A schools, 37% of the pupils in the schools come from out of area, including over 2fe from Southend. With the total number of out of area pupils currently in Group A schools exceeding 8fe on average, no action is considered necessary even based on the upper estimate of need set out above. Movement in the opposite direction should also be considered but capacity in the Group exceeds GP regs for the current secondary cohorts by over 3fe and, without housing, this gap is set to grow. In the event additional space were required, the Deans has unused accommodation.

Secondary B: South (Canvey):

Falling birth rates are a concern and any sustained need for additional places will only materialise if rates recover significantly. On average the three measures set out above suggest the level of surplus places on the Island could grow, even once housing growth is allowed for. This would change if a significant proportion of the dwellings are built as houses rather than flats (as tested). Cornelius Vermuyden has a large site should additional capacity be required.

Key Points

- No land allocations for school use have been identified as necessary to meet the level of demand indicated in this housing scenario.
- Should school expansion or recommissioning be required, financial planning obligations as set out in the ECC [Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions \(Revised 2024\)](#) will be sought.
- For capacity to be considered 'available', safe direct walking and cycling routes must be established to local schools. Particular attention to rural and edge of settlement sites is required, with bespoke policies possibly needed for any off-site works.
- Cross border issues must be fully discussed with neighbouring authorities to meet the duty to co-operate.
- Further assessment will be undertaken to support individual planning applications once the developer has determined the detailed housing mix.