

Approach to securing education contributions from new developments

Date of Issue:	15 April 2026	
Date of Decision:	23 April 2026	
Report to:	Cabinet Member – Housing and Highways	
Report of:	Chief Planning Officer	
Portfolio:	Housing and Highways	
Wards affected:	All	
Is this a key decision:	No	No
Included in Forward Plan:		
Exempt/confidential report:	No	

Summary:

This report sets out the current approach that is used to secure planning obligations towards primary education, why this is no longer appropriate and the preferred alternative approach.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet Member (Housing and Highways)

Agrees to revoke the ‘Contributions towards education provision Developer Note’ (May 2023) and to use the Department of Education approach for calculating contributions to provide additional primary and secondary school places for relevant major housing schemes.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To be more flexible on how we secure contributions towards additional school places from new housing proposals.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

To retain the current approach. However, this approach would require the Council to commission plans for a typical secondary school extension so that it could calculate costs

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no costs associated with this report, but the approach will bring in additional contributions towards schools in Sefton.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
Legal Implications:	None
Equality Implications:	There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: N/A
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: N/A
Commission, broker and provide core services: N/A
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: Contribute to continued investment in education
Cleaner Greener: N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD9319/26) and Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD6519/26) have been consulted, and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 The Sefton Local Plan (April 2017) allocated sufficient land for over 11,500 homes. Whilst this would support only a relatively modest increase in Sefton's population (estimated 5,000 population increase between 2012-2030), there were areas of Sefton that would see greater housing growth and population change than others, such as Maghull and Southport.

1.2 As a consequence, it was decided, in consultation with the Local Education Authority, that contributions should be sought from major housing developments towards expanding schools to accommodate population growth. Based on the evidence available at that time, this would only be for primary schools in certain areas. It was considered that that secondary schools across Sefton had sufficient capacity to absorb any population change.

1.3 In September 2017, the Council introduced a Guide for Developers to set out the locations, development threshold and contribution required. The level of contribution was increased each year in line with inflation and the note was updated in [May 2023](#) to update the locations the contributions would be sought.

1.4 However, in December 2024, the government changed the standard methodology for how it calculates a local authority's housing requirement. This increased Sefton's annual housing requirement from 578 to 1,368 (now 1,360). It also introduced the concept of 'grey belt' land in the Green Belt, which provided a much more permissive route for housing proposals. As Sefton can no longer demonstrate a 5-year supply for housing land, it is vulnerable to housing schemes across the borough.

1.5 As a result, it is much more difficult to predict where areas of major housing growth will occur. We can no longer say for any certainty that the current and proposed school estate is sufficient to meet future demand. It is therefore considered necessary to review our approach to securing education contributions to be more flexible.

2. Proposed New Approach

2.1 The Current approach secures primary contributions only from major housing schemes in Thornton (Manor ward), parts of Maghull, Aintree and Melling (Sudell and Molyneux wards) and parts of northeast Southport (Meols and Norwood). These are the

locations which include significant unconsented Local Plan housing allocations. The current (2025/26) cost per home is £2,770.

2.2 The Department for Education (DfE) provides its own [method](#) to calculate developer contributions towards both primary and secondary schools to increase capacity. This guidance sets out that Councils are not expected (paragraph 31) to cost out a site-specific scheme to support a planning application. They instead direct Councils to use the ‘assumed cost of mainstream school places on the relevant average regional costs published in the [DfE school places scorecard](#)’.

2.3 The current Northwest costs¹ per school place are set out as follows:

	Primary school	Secondary School
New school	£24,416	£29,579
Permanent Expansion	£20,450	£28,127
Temporary Expansion	£9,668	£10,854

2.4 In Sefton, the Local Education Authority use the following ratios for pupil generation from new housing proposals:

- 17.5 primary school pupils per 100 new homes
- 10.5 secondary pupils per 100 new homes

2.5 In Sefton, the monies that the Council have previously accrued will go towards permanent primary school expansions (e.g. Summerhill Primary and St William of York) as opposed to new build. Therefore, we can compare what we currently secure for primary schools and what we could do using the DfE approach. For a notional 100 home proposal, the table below show what the two approaches would secure if it was determined that there wasn’t sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional primary pupils from the development.

	Total obligation	Cost per home
Current approach	£277,000	£2,770.00
DfE approach	£357,875	£3,578.75

2.6 It is considered that the increase in contributions would better reflect the actual costs of building work that is needed. For example, feedback from colleagues in education are that they often struggle to make the improvements necessary with the obligations received.

2.7 We don’t currently ask for contributions towards secondary education places. However, with a number of pre-application enquiries for significant housing proposals in the Green Belt, colleagues in education have requested that we should secure contributions towards expanding a local secondary school to accommodate any growth in pupils. Without detailed school expansion plans to estimate costs, we would have to rely on the DfE approach. For the notional 100 home proposal, the table below show what we would look to secure if it was determined that there wasn’t sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional secondary pupils from the development.

¹ Average cost per place for permanent, temporary and new school projects

	Total obligation	Cost per home
DfE approach	£295,333.50	£2,953.34

2.8 Therefore, it is proposed to revoke the current approach and move forward with the DfE approach for both primary and secondary contributions. We will liaise with the Local Education Authority, using their published school capacity information, to make requests for obligations on all major housing proposals, unless it is clear that there is sufficient school capacity to accommodate the growth that we would anticipate in the local area.