

Establishment of a new primary school at Sawtry

To: Children and Young People's Committee

Meeting Date: 1 March 2022

From: Executive Director: People & Communities

Electoral division(s): Sawtry and Stilton

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: As a result of this report, the Council will have a preferred sponsor for the new primary school in Sawtry, endorsed by the Committee, thus enabling the Council to meet its statutory school place planning duty.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

Endorse Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) as the Council's preferred sponsor for the new primary school in Sawtry.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Section 14 of the Education Act (1996) places local authorities (LAs) under a general duty to provide a school place for every child living in their area of responsibility who is of statutory school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state-funded sector. To achieve this the Council monitors provision across the county and, where necessary, takes appropriate action to increase capacity in response to identified demand.
- 1.2 The Education and Inspections Act (2006) places additional duties on LAs to ensure fair access to educational opportunity, to promote choice for parents and secure diversity in the provision of schools.
- 1.3 The Council also has a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for parents to work or to undertake education or training which could lead to employment and secure free provision for all 3- and 4- year olds (and up to 40% of 2 year olds who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria) of 15 hours a week, 38 weeks a year, of early years (EY) education. The Childcare Act 2016 extended this entitlement to provide an additional 15 hours (per week 38 weeks per year) of free EY provision for 3- and 4-years olds who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria.
- 1.4 In recent years, three large developments have been granted planning approval in Sawtry which will increase the number of primary aged children living in the village. These comprise Glebe Farm (80 dwellings), Gidding Road (295 dwellings) and Glatton Road (340 dwellings). The existing Infant and Junior schools operate from the same site which has limited scope for expansion. It is for this reason that a new school is required by September 2023 to ensure that places are available for families moving into these developments. The school will initially have capacity to offer 1 form of entry/210 places but will be built with core facilities for it to expand to 2FE/420 places in line with housing growth and increased pupil numbers.
- 1.5 EY accommodation will also be provided on the school site. At the appropriate time, the Council will run a competitive tender process for interested parties in order to identify an EY service provider. The timetable will be planned to ensure that EY provision is in place and operational from the day on which the school opens.
- 1.6 The 2011 Education Act sets requirements for LAs in the establishment of new schools as follows:
 - The Council must seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy or Free School and specify the date by which proposals must be received.
 - Following the published closing date, by which proposals should have been submitted, the Council must contact the Secretary of State for Education, to outline the steps it has taken to secure applications for the establishment of an Academy or Free School, together with details of any which have been received.

Only if no Academy or Free School proposals are received, can the Council seek the Secretary of State's permission to begin a competition process to establish a maintained school under the provisions set out in the 2006 Education Act.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The new school will open to pupils in Reception only. It will then increase its capacity year-on-year until the school is fully operational in all 7-year groups of the primary phase. In the event of pressures on places in Years 1-6 in Sawtry, which might necessitate opening classes in other year groups earlier, the Council would work with the successful sponsor to determine admission arrangements, in consultation with the Infant and Junior Schools.
- 2.2 The successful sponsor will be expected to operate with a reduced Published Admission Number (PAN) for the first two years, as shown in Table 1. This will enable the school to meet the needs of the community, whilst minimising the level of disruption to other schools in the surrounding area. The timing of installation of some infrastructure elements will also limit the number of pupils that the school will be able to accommodate initially.

Table 1: Proposed school organisation

	Academic Year		
Year group	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Reception	10	20	TBC

- 2.3 The Council's sponsor selection process was established in response to requirements of the 2006 Education Act. The process has since been reviewed and updated in 2012 to take account of the requirements of the 2011 Education Act, receiving Cabinet approval on 17 April 2012 and in 2016 to take account of further Advice from the Department for Education (DfE). Some slight adjustments were also made when the Council moved from a Cabinet to a Committee system. An outline of the process is provided in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 A four-week pre-launch consultation commenced on 7th June 2021. In September 2021, the Council published a local and national press announcement setting out the need for the new primary school. Potential sponsors were invited to submit proposals by 27th October 2021, to establish and run the school, as an Academy, a Free School or a Voluntary Aided School. A detailed School Specification document (see **Appendix 2**) was produced to support potential applicants/sponsors in developing their proposals. These were published on the Council's website and also sent to the DfE.
- 2.5 Five proposals were received by the 27th July 2021 deadline from the following multi-academy trusts (MATs):
- ACES Academies Trust
 - Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT)
 - Diamond Learning Partnership Trust
 - Discovery Schools Academy Trust
 - Hampton Academies Trust

Copies of the [executive summaries](#) of the applications are available to view or download from the Council's website.

Following a short-listing exercise against published criteria (see **Appendix 3**) the following 3 MATs were invited to attend a joint officer/member assessment panel as the final part of the competition process.:

- ACES Academies Trust
- Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust
- Discovery Schools Academy Trust

2.6 The Assessment Panel met on 13th January 2022 to assess each short-listed sponsor's application against the criteria detailed in the School Specification document. The interview panel comprised of 2 members of the Children & Young People's Committee, and the Local Member for Sawtry, plus 3 Council officers. A copy of the assessment criteria used by the panel, together with the details of the membership of the panel is provided in **Appendix 3**.

2.7 The recommendation of the Assessment Panel is that CMAT should be awarded the opportunity to establish and run the school. The particular strengths of their proposal were:

1. They are well-established in the community as they are responsible for both the junior school and secondary school, and their Head Office is also situated in the village. Throughout their interview, they recognised the financial challenges of opening a new school and identified potential to utilise staff and resources from their existing schools to support the new school, including for wraparound provision which could be of particular benefit whilst numbers are low.
2. They demonstrated an excellent understanding of the demographics of the community and were able to draw upon their experiences to identify priorities for the first cohort of pupils. For example, a focus on reading.
3. They articulated the importance of working with both the LA and existing schools to determine the school's PAN. They also voiced their commitment to a tripartite agreement with the LA and Infants School to ensure that there is not an over-provision of places which could undermine Reception numbers there during the initial years following opening of the new primary school as the development is built out.
4. They could clearly identify the key tasks and priorities in the lead-up to, and immediately following the school opening, including the importance of working in collaboration with existing schools and the LA, drawing upon experience of opening new schools in the past to evidence their answers.
5. They have a well-established central team which includes a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Executive Director, Secondary Education Director and a Primary Education Director. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a National Leader of Education and the Trust have a growing number of Specialist Leaders of Education whom they can deploy where needed to provide support.
6. CMAT's imminent merger with Cambridge Primary Education Trust (CPET) the successful primary specialist MAT, will bring significant primary expertise to CMAT, a track record of excellence, and its Teaching School Hub (the only one in Cambridgeshire).
7. They have a strong track record in improving achievement and attainment across schools in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.
8. They have a detailed vision and clear mechanisms for meeting the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable (V) children including those with Special Educational

Needs and/or Disability and Pupil Premium children as part of a comprehensive and well-articulated Trust wide 'SENDV' strategy.

9. The Trust expressed an interest in developing on-site specialist SEND provision at the new school, if the LA felt that this would be of benefit.

2.8 The outcome of the Committee's consideration of the proposals will be forwarded to the DfE as soon as the Decision Summary of the Committee's meeting has been published, within a few days of the meeting taking place.

2.9 Officers have been advised that the proposals will be considered, and a decision made by the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) Advisory Board, at a meeting on 24 March 2022, regarding which potential sponsor he will recommend to the Secretary of State. If approved, this will culminate in a funding agreement between the DfE and the Trust.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The following bullet points sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- There is an expectation that schools will provide access to and use of the school's accommodation for activities e.g., sporting, cultural, outside of school hours.
- Schools are community assets; and
- Help to support the creation and development of new communities

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Providing access to local and high-quality education and associated children's services should enhance the life opportunities of the communities they serve

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- New primary schools designed and equipped for 21st century learning, including providing high quality EY provision should maximise educational opportunities for children

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

The following bullet points sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Innovative design, supported by robust planning policy and expectations should ensure that new schools set an example and create communities that people will want to live, work and study in
- If pupils have access to local schools and associated children's services, they are more likely attend them by either cycling or walking rather than by car or public transport

This will contribute to the development of both healthier and more independent lifestyles and contribute to the overall impact of the Council's policy to reduce carbon emissions in Cambridgeshire by 2050.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Schools are safe places in which to teach, learn and develop
- Providing a local school will ensure that services can be accessed by local families in greatest need

4. Significant Implications

4.1.1 Resource Implications

Where new schools are commissioned to meet basic need, LAs are responsible for the pre-opening start-up and post-opening diseconomy of scale costs. These are currently met from the Council's Growth Fund which is centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding. The amount in the fund and the criteria for its allocation are subject to annual Schools Forum approval. National policy changes have impacted on how growth funding is allocated to individual local authorities.

4.1.3 Where a new school is opening, LAs are required to estimate the pupil numbers expected to join the school in September to generate funding through the Authority Proforma Tool (APT). LAs should also estimate pupil numbers for all schools and academies, including free schools, where they have opened in the previous seven years and are still adding year groups. These estimates should be adjusted each year to take account of the actual pupil numbers in the previous funding period. For academies an allocation of funding is recouped from each LA and following formula replication by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) an annual grant allocated.

4.1.5 Pre-opening funding for primary schools is currently £50,000 and is calculated on the basis of 1 term prior to the date of opening. Post-opening diseconomies funding is provided at the rate of £125 for each new mainstream place created in the primary phase on an annual basis, plus an additional allocation to reflect the number of year groups that the school will ultimately have that do not yet have pupils.

4.1.6 Final revenue funding amounts for new schools will vary depending on numerous factors. As the majority of the funding will come directly from the ESFA, their application of the local formula factor and national factors is key to determining these amounts.

4.1.7 The DfE have recently consulted on reforms to the [National Funding Formula](#) (NFF) for schools and how they transition away from local formulae to all schools' funding allocations being determined directly by the NFF in the years ahead. The proposals include potential changes to the way in which new schools and growth are funded, although there is limited detail at this stage. Therefore, if implemented this is likely to impact on both the funding methodology and local flexibility for new and growing schools. Officers are expecting the next stages of the DfE consultation on future funding arrangements later this year which might give a clearer idea on the direction of travel, longer term role of the LA and timescales for implementation.

4.1.8 The site for the new school was secured as part the Section 106 (S106) agreement for the Glatton Road site. Funding for the build is included within the Council's Capital Programme. This includes £3,757,000 basic need funding, and £1,997,000 in S106 contributions from the developer of the Gidding Road site. A contribution will also be sought from the developer of

the Glatton Road site which, based on the indicative housing mix, is expected to be in the region of £3,500,000. The balance, in the region of £2,686,000, will be met by the Council from prudential borrowing.

4.2.1 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The Council delivers the capital projects where new schools are commissioned under the presumption process and these schools are designed and built under its framework arrangements.

4.2.2 The Council will grant a standard 125-year Academy lease of the whole site (permanent school site) to the successful sponsor based on the model lease prepared by the DfE as this protects the Council's interest by ensuring that:

- The land and buildings would be returned to the Council when the lease ends.
- Use is restricted to educational purposes only.
- The Academy is only able to transfer the lease to another educational establishment if it has the Council's consent.
- The Academy (depending on the lease wording) is only able to sub-let part of the site with approval from the Council.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are specific statutory requirements which have been followed in seeking a sponsor for the new primary school under the provisions of the Education Act 2011. The process adopted by the Council is compliant with the requirements of the Act.

4.4.1 Equality and Diversity Implications

The Council is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are able to attend their local mainstream school where possible, with only those children with the most complex and challenging needs requiring places at specialist provision.

4.4.2 The accommodation provided for delivery of early years and childcare and primary education will fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and current Council standards.

4.4.3 As part of the planning process for new schools, LAs must also undertake an assessment of the impact, both on existing educational institutions locally and in terms of impact on particular groups of pupils from an equality's perspective.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The process adopted by the Council for consideration of new school presumption proposals makes provision for a public meeting at which members of the local community can meet the potential sponsors and ask them questions about their proposals. This was held virtually on 24th November 2021, with more than 20 members of public in attendance. Questions and answers from this session were also published online, for members of the public who were unable to attend. All new school projects are subject to a statutory process which includes public consultation at various stages e.g. prior to the launch of the competition process, and at pre-planning application stage

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

All CYP Spokes were invited to participate in the assessment panel stage of the sponsor selection process. The local Member for Sawtry, Councillor Simon Bywater, participated in the joint officer/member panel with Councillors Bryony Goodliffe, Chairman of the CYP Committee, and Simone Taylor. Councillors Maria King, Vice Chair of the CYP Committee, and Samantha Hoy were invited, but unable to attend.

4.7 Public Health Implications

It is Council policy that schools:

- should be sited as centrally as possible to the communities they serve, unless location is dictated by physical constraints and/or the opportunity to reduce land take by providing playing fields within the green belt or green corridors
- should be sited so that the maximum journey distance for a young person is less than the statutory walking distances (3 miles for secondary school children, 2 miles for primary school children)
- should be located close to public transport links and be served by a good network of walking and cycling routes
- should be provided with Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs) and all-weather pitches (AWPs) to encourage and support wider community use

New schools will have an impact on the Public Health commissioned services such as school nursing, vision screening, National Childhood Measurement Programme, school-based immunisation programmes.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status

While new schools will be delivered in line with current planning policy around energy efficient and low carbon buildings, they will still result in increased energy demand. On balance, this is a neutral status.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status:

Schools on new developments are located to be accessible by walking and cycling. Where families express a preference to attend a school outside their catchment they are encouraged, where possible, to travel by sustainable means including public transport.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status:

The planning applications for new schools include landscape designs and will be in line with planning policy to create some green space. Any trees removed and replanted as part of site clearance will be addressed through the planning application process and will be in line with current policy.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Negative Status:

The construction process will generate some unavoidable waste; however, this will be minimised as far as possible and robust waste management strategies implemented throughout the construction process. Waste generated by new schools will be subject to normal recycling facilities being provided on site. Other services operating from the school, e.g. early years provision by a third party, will adhere to policies on recycling.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status:

The planning application for any new school will be submitted in line with planning policy. The statutory consultees include the Council's Floods team.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Neutral Status:

The planning application for any new school will be submitted in line with planning policy. Air pollution will be addressed as part of this process.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral Status:

Any new school proposal is designed to deliver education provision in the local community but will also facilitate community activities e.g. sport and other activities by community organisations through the school's letting policy. The services provided are not specific to climate change, however, local provision makes access easier. On balance, the impact on this implication is neutral.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman. Public Health Consultant

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

- [School Specification Document Sept 2021](#)
- [Academy and free school presumption departmental advice November 2019](#)
- [A guide to new mainstream free school revenue funding 2021 to 2022](#)

The remaining source documents are available on request from:

Box ALC2607
New Shire Hall,
Alconbury Weald Civic Hub,
Emery Crescent, Enterprise Campus,
Alconbury Weald,
Huntingdon
PE28 4YE

- Assessment Panel Evaluation Document
- Assessment Panel Interview Questions
- ACES Academies Trust Application
- Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust Application
- Diamond Learning Partnership Trust Application
- Discovery Schools Academy Trust Application
- Hampton Academies Trust Application

6. Accessibility

- 6.1 Accessible versions of the appendices are available on request from clare.buckingham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk