
Project:	Land South of Patshull Road, Albrighton	Appeal Ref:	6007402
Title:	Education Response to Rep from The Marches Academy Trust	Document Ref:	
Originator:	Kerrie Norman	Date:	21/09/2026

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A letter dated 17/09/2027 from The Marches Academy Trust was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 21/09/2026 regarding Idsall School.
- 1.2 The Marches Academy Trust is the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) that operates Idsall School, in addition to 18 other academies in the area.
- 1.3 The MAT is legally responsible for operating Idsall School with a Funding Agreement in place with the Secretary of State for Education.
- 1.4 The MAT is the admissions authority for Idsall School and must apply to the Department for Education to vary their admission number, develop new buildings on their land or make other substantial changes to the operation of the school.
- 1.5 The current Head Teacher of Idsall School has already indicated publicly that she does not support the expansion of Idsall School to support new housing development in the area (refer to Appendix C of CD 1.18). The MAT does not appear to have made any previous statements supporting the expansion of Idsall School.
- 1.6 The letter received from The Marches Academy Trust today indicates for the first time that the MAT would be "...willing to explore and support expansion opportunities within its schools, subject to the necessary capital investment being fully funded by the local authority".
- 1.7 I will respond to the matters raised in the MAT's letter in this document.

2.0 Commitment to Expansion

- 2.1 In my view, the letter from the MAT is generic and makes no reference to the scale of expansion in pupil numbers that they could or would support.

- 2.2** There is no clear commitment to expand and only a “willingness to explore and support opportunities within its schools”.
- 2.3** The letter makes no reference to the public statements given by the current Head Teacher of the school that she does not support expansion and that the school is currently full.
- 2.4** The MAT is unlikely to have been made aware that if they are to host all additional secondary pupil demand, the scale of expansion will require building on their school playing fields.
- 2.5** There is no acknowledgement in the letter of the statutory processes that the MAT would have to follow in order to increase their admission number.
- 2.6** There is no acknowledgement in the letter of the risk assessment and review process that the Trust Board would have to complete in order to be able to commit to expansion and properly assess the effects of the expansion on quality, safeguarding, pupil experience, parking and transport.
- 2.7** Only the Trust Board can commit to expansion of the Academy and it is unclear from the CEO’s letter whether the matter has been considered by the Trust Board or when these governance procedures would be completed.
- 2.8** The late submission of the letter, the qualifications within it and the lack of clarity over whether the Trust Board has been afforded the opportunity to consider the detail mean that my view on the security and suitability of Idsall School expansion is unchanged.

3.0 Deliverability of the Physical Expansion of Idsall School

- 3.1** The Idsall School site has low levels of hard informal social space and is dominated by school buildings and school playing fields.
- 3.2** Neither the Council, nor the MAT, has provided any information on the potential build strategy for a large-scale expansion of the school.
- 3.3** The only feasible location for a new building is in the main school car park and on the current school playing fields.
- 3.4** There are substantial planning challenges with building on school playing fields, as the Sport England exception tests must be met and the playing fields must be replaced.

- 3.5** Additionally, there are likely to be challenges with highways and transport with a very large increase in the number of pupils attending the school and travelling by both bus and private vehicle.
- 3.6** There is no indication that the Local Planning Authority, the Highway Authority and Sport England would support the scale of expansion required for this development and the cumulative impacts of other deliverable sites in the area.
- 3.7** My view is that it is not realistic for Idsall School to accommodate all secondary place demand and that a Safeguarded School Site is necessary. The provision of the Secondary School Land at the Proposed Development makes prudent provision for education and offers a deliverable solution.