

AWCA S10 consultation report

Executive Summary

This Section 10 Consultation Report has been compiled in respect of the Free School Application for Alconbury Weald Church Academy made by the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT). This report will support a decision made by the Department for Education on entering into a funding agreement with DEMAT.

The development of Alconbury Weald Church Academy has been encouraged as Cambridgeshire County Council has identified a need for a new secondary school to reflect the growing demand for secondary school places within the local area. The process for establishing a Free School includes a statutory requirement, under the Academies Act 2010, to consult ‘with those they think appropriate’. In establishing proposals for Alconbury Weald Church Academy, its proposers, DEMAT, have actively engaged potential partners and other stakeholders throughout the process. This ongoing consultation has played an important part in shaping the project so far, and if Alconbury Weald Church Academy is approved, discussions will continue until the Free School is opened and beyond.

The statutory consultation involved a number of different methods in reaching out to the public and included a questionnaire geared specifically to Alconbury Weald Church Academy’s offer. The methods employed are outlined in more detail subsequently within the report. This report covers the public consultation carried out as a response to the statutory requirement and sets out the audience, activities undertaken and the responses received. The statutory consultation started on 25th February 2026 and closed on 6th April 2026.

Only two out of ninety-one respondents to the question ‘should the Secretary of State enter into a funding agreement with DEMAT’ answered no, however, the associated concerns referred mostly to the DEMAT’s existing primary provision in the locality. Responses to these concerns raised can be seen in Appendix 4. The overall response from the public consultation period indicates that the overwhelming majority of respondents support the establishment of Alconbury Weald Church Academy.

Introduction

The Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy-Trust (DEMAT) is delighted to be appointed by the Department for Education to open Alconbury Weald Church Academy (AWCA). The school is now in its pre-opening phase and we are now required to undertake a public consultation. Alconbury Weald Church Academy is a brand new, fully inclusive, state funded, mixed secondary school, located on the Alconbury Weald development in Huntingdonshire. The planned opening date is September 2027, with the first 120 students joining in Year 7 then growing year on year to reach phase 1 full capacity of 600 by September 2031. As demand grows there is scope to extend the PAN up to 330 in each year group. Current year 5 pupils will be the first cohort of young people to join the school.

The school will be part of DEMAT, a large multi-academy trust which exists to create the foundations to build successful futures. This vision is underpinned by the desire to do more for high-quality education for all children and young people – and a commitment to schools working together to secure an inclusive, ambitious, collegiate and imaginative offer for parents and their children. DEMAT will be appointing a Headteacher for AWCA shortly, along with teaching and other staff. As part of the local community, we are the school where every student is valued. Our vision for learning is based around the whole child, ensuring no child is left behind. Our unique, innovative and exciting curriculum in Year 7 will provide an excellent transition from Primary School. This will enable pupils from all starting points to make rapid progress and enjoy their learning whilst improving their literacy and oracy skills.

What happens at Key Stage Three plays a crucial part in a child's educational journey – and this is something that is quite often overlooked at secondary schools. Due to the fact we are growing from a small cohort of approximately 120 in the first year our sole focus will be on ensuring happy, safe, confident, articulate students who in turn secure maximum progress in all their subject areas.

We are committed to achieving high standards in every area of the school from our vibrant curriculum, which provides a combination of challenging and imaginative learning experiences, to a wide range of stimulating extra-curricular activities and excellent pastoral care. With the support of our committed teaching and associate staff, we want to help you shape your child's future and encourage them to flourish by giving them the very best all-round education. We are driven by an aspirational approach for our students, and we are determined that they will succeed during their five years with us.

- AWCA will offer a broad and balanced curriculum underpinned by a Christian ethos, to ensure students can 'live life to the full and seek for that which is good, that which is right and that which is true';
- The curriculum will align with the National Curriculum and serve the needs of the diverse, multi-cultural local community;

- We will ensure all students have an ambitious, challenging, and powerful curriculum so students learn more, know more and do more;
- A full complement of core and non-core subjects will be on offer to all pupils;
- We will offer a wide range of enrichment opportunities to ensure students develop a broad range of skills, knowledge and cultural capital;
- The PSHE and RSE curriculum will promote fundamental British Values and support students in living healthy, happy lives;
- We will ensure that all students have full access to the curriculum to ensure no child is left behind including those with SEND;
- We will have clearly defined curriculum end points to assess student progress;
- Prioritising opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is a key feature of AWCA life;
- Our curriculum offer supports young people to become responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society;
- We will support our students to develop character and moral virtue.

Key Stage 3

- All students will study English, Maths, Science, Geography, History, Computing, Design Technology, MFL, Art, Drama, Religious Studies, Physical Education and Music;
- All students will have timetabled Enrichment sessions each week to develop Cultural Capital and broaden their experiences, reflecting the context of the local area;

Key Stage 4

- All students will have a wide range of academic and vocational subjects to choose from;
- Individual careers guidance will be delivered by external providers throughout the year

Extra-Curriculum

- All students will have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sports such as rugby, netball, football, hockey, cricket, and athletics;
- Drama and music extra-curriculum events including peripatetic lessons and drama productions;
- STEM Challenge, talent shows, poetry competitions;
- Leadership development through a Cadet unit, and Duke of Edinburgh awards;
- The library will be available for students to work in every day to support reading and independent study.

Consultation overview

DEMAT carried out significant stakeholder engagement activities during the commencement of its formal S10 consultation. This meant that many community members were aware of the AWCA proposal. Such activities were utilised to share information of AWCA with prospective students, parents, local residents and community members. The formal consultation, which ran over a period of 6 weeks, directed stakeholders to access a wider range of information available on the trust website.

DEMAT provided opportunities for stakeholders to feed back on the proposals and ultimately record their decision on the key question of whether a funding agreement should be entered into between the Trust and the Secretary of State for Education, for the new Alconbury Weald Church Academy to be opened in September 2027. By consulting members of the local community, local authority, councillors, schools, businesses, and other stakeholders, it has been possible to gauge the level of support for the proposal.

The public consultation period began on 26th February 2026 and concluded on 6th April 2026. Details about the proposed Alconbury Weald Church Academy were set out in a dedicated area of the school website, in emails, letters, and phone calls to key stakeholders. The public was invited to respond to a specific questionnaire (Appendix 1) relating to Alconbury Weald Church Academy and was also encouraged to make additional comments throughout the consultation process. Throughout the consultation period, DEMAT has actively engaged with stakeholders to:

- Encourage feedback on the plans for the proposed Alconbury Weald Church Academy
- Ensure that there was clarity for all stakeholders around what the Free School status would mean
- Communicate the vision and ethos for the proposed Alconbury Weald Church Academy
- Communicate the Trust aspirations for the proposed Alconbury Weald Church Academy
- Capture all feedback from stakeholders and providing a response where required
- Facilitate the stakeholders input to the development of the proposals
- Seek endorsement to enter into the funding agreement with the Secretary of State

This consultation was delivered to provide those both directly and indirectly affected by proposal with as much information as possible about the plans for AWCA and give them an opportunity to respond and raise any concerns.

Key Consultation Methods

- Consultation Booklet- this contained a summarised version of the information located on the website and was made available as a full PDF on the website (Appendix 2)
- FAQs- these were collated and updated throughout the consultation to reflect the voice of stakeholders and to address issues as they arise. They were also made available on

the AWCA pages within the DEMAT website. The feedback enabled the Trust to shape the direction of the communications, delivery in engagement events and the Trust plans.

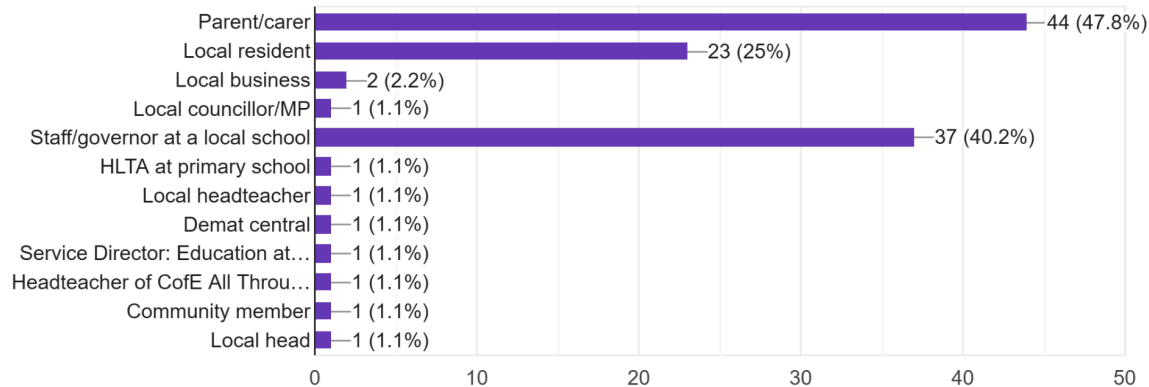
- Questionnaire- produced online and in paper form (distributed upon request). A copy of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 1. In total 92 people responded to the questionnaire.
- Policies- the key policy consulted on was the Admissions Policy. This was available in full online and was discussed with stakeholders through the engagement event. The slides for this event can be seen in Appendix 3.
- Engagement events- A s10 engagement event was held on the 10th March 2026. Common questions and issues raised during the virtual engagement events were added to the FAQs sheet which can be seen in Appendix 4.
- Emails- The trust sent several emails containing information of the S1 and Education providers.
- Publication of the consultation report- this report will be published online to allow stakeholders to view the results of the consultation process.

DEMAT is content that the formal consultation process, as set out in this report, has been both comprehensive and appropriate.

Consultation response analysis

Question 1 Which of the following best applies to you?

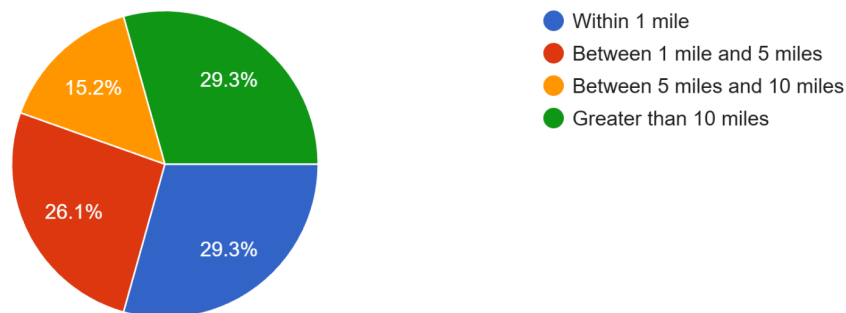
92 responses



The majority of respondents are parents/carers although a number of respondents identified as multiple categories. A large number of staff/governors at local schools also contributed to the consultation.

Question 2 Where do you live approximately in relation to the proposed school site, or if you are responding on behalf of an organisation, where is it located in relation to the school?

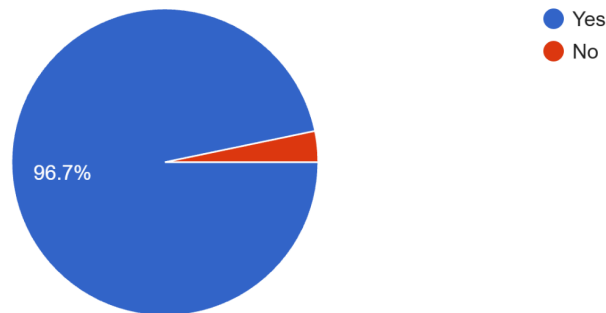
92 responses



Over half the respondents (56%) live in the locality (0-5miles) of the proposed new school.

Question 3 Do you agree that Alconbury Weald Church Academy will contribute to the provision of additional school places for local children as th...ments on the Alconbury Weald development proceed?

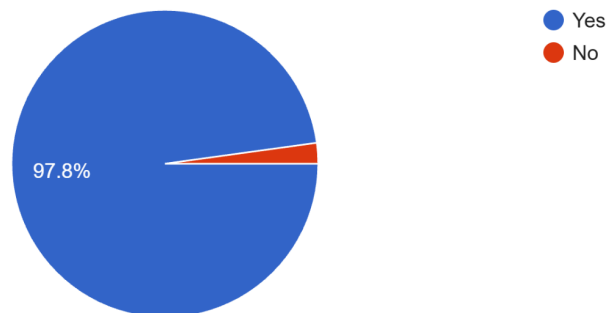
92 responses



89/92 of respondents agreed that the proposed AWCA would contribute to the provision of additional school places for local children. Out of the three that didn't agree, two of these cited the lack of faith admission arrangements or the limit of the proposed catchment area for their answer.

Question 4 Do you support the vision and values of the school?

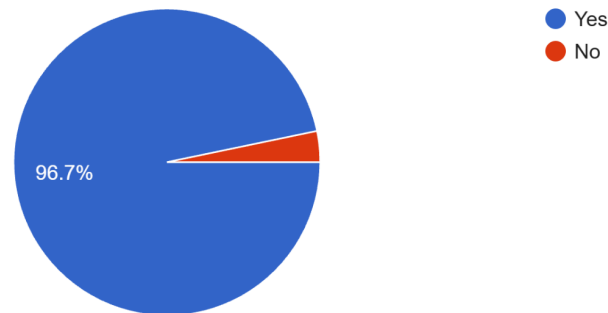
92 responses



90/92 respondents supported the vision and values of the school. Of the two that didn't, one respondent disagreed with the proposed uniform as the rationale for this answer.

Question 5 Do you agree that the admissions policy for Alconbury Weald Church Academy priorities local children?

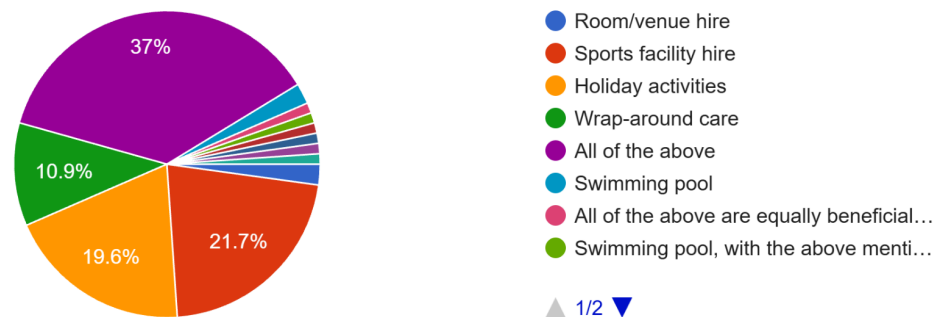
92 responses



Whilst DEMAT consulted separately on the Admission Policy, it was included in the s10 consultation form as well. 89/92 respondents supported the policy. Of the three that didn't, two of these cited the lack of faith criteria as the rationale behind their answer.

Question 6 The school will be an integral part of the local community. What additional services would you like to see provided on the school site?

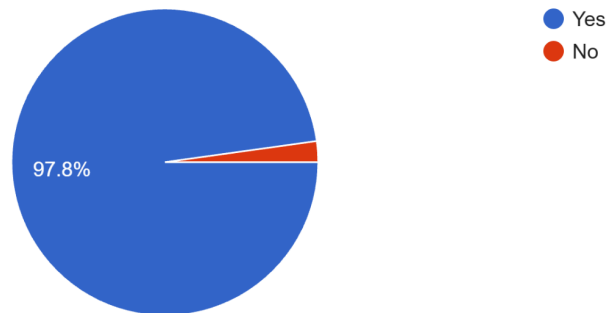
92 responses



There was broad support for the provision of a range of services extending beyond the curriculum. Sports and facility hire were among the most popular requests. The provision of a swimming pool was also popular but does not fall within the DfE build specification for new schools.

Question 7 Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a funding agreement with DEMAT to open Alconbury Weald Church Academy?

91 responses



89/91 respondents agreed that the Secretary of State should enter into a funding agreement with DEMAT. Of the two respondents that didn't agree, one supported every other aspect of the proposal but had reservations over DEMAT being the Trust to run it citing secondary experience within the Trust. The other disagreed with every aspect of the proposal.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to submit additional questions or comments about the proposal. Those relevant to the s10 consultation have been included in Appendix 4, along with letters received from Cambridgeshire County Council and a local academy trust. Where questions have been asked the responses to these can be found in Appendix 4 (FAQs).

Consultation conclusions

DEMAT believes that the public consultation has been robust and extensive and concludes from the questionnaire feedback that the consultation process has been accessible and informative to the majority of stakeholders.

The high number of respondents indicates that the consultation information was accessed by a large number of the public. 92 respondents is a significant number of participants to offer a considered and relevant group viewpoint and the overwhelming majority of the feedback has been very positive. A very positive response to the question asking whether the Secretary of State should enter into a funding agreement with DEMAT was also recorded (97.8% agreed).

The concerns raised through this formal consultation have been responded to in the FAQ section. The Trust believe that the concerns raised were associated with our existing primary provision in the locality and the viewpoint that as this is the first secondary school in the Trust this poses a potential risk. One local academy trust is supportive of the proposal to open AWCA but does not agree with the proposed opening date of 2027, no other respondents raised a concern regarding the proposed opening date (Appendix 5).

This report outlines a full response to these concerns and highlights Cambridgeshire County Council's requirement for additional secondary school places within the local area (Appendix 6).

Acknowledgements

DEMAT would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders who engaged in this consultation, took time to complete the consultation questionnaire, visited the website and attended the engagement. Your responses, comments and feedback were all gratefully received.

Next Steps

As a result of this consultation it is recommended that;

- This report is reviewed and approved by the DEMAT Board of Trustees.

- The Trust continues to ensure that the DEMAT website provides regular updates on building developments, FAQ'S and the appointment of staff to ensure that the expertise within the trust is known and that the concerns raised are mitigated.
- The Trust continues to encourage stakeholders to communicate their enquiries through the available channels