

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report seeks approval to undertake a feasibility study to identify a site in the Hucknall and Ollerton areas to build a new special school of 75 places. The feasibility study costs will be approximately £150,000.

Information

2. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) replacing educational statements of special educational needs. As well as widening the scope of the previous statements of educational need, the Act also extended the age range for EHCPs from 18 to 25 years.
3. As a result, like most other councils, Nottinghamshire County Council has witnessed a significant increase in demand for EHC assessments and subsequent plans. Since 2010, Nottinghamshire has witnessed a 107.7% increase in the number of statements of special educational needs and, since 2015, EHCPs (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 The increase in EHCPs / Statements of Special Educational Needs since 2010

Location	Percentage increase since 2010
Nottinghamshire	107.7%
East Midlands	39.4%
Statistical neighbours	44.5%
England	55.1%

Source: SEN2 (EHC Plans Nottinghamshire County Council is responsible for)

4. In Nottinghamshire in 2010, there were 1,360 statements of educational need; in 2016, there were 1,844 EHCPs and statements; and by 2018 there were 2,499 EHCPs. By January 2023, if current trends continue, Nottinghamshire County Council is likely to have issued over 4,000 EHCPs, as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

5. The challenges faced by the Council have been exacerbated by historical factors with high levels of inclusion within publicly funded maintained schools. Due to the high levels of inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) within mainstream publicly funded schools in the County, the special school estate remains relatively small. Following the 2014 Act and the subsequent increasingly academised sector, there has been an increased demand for specialist provision. Given that Nottinghamshire's special schools remain full, almost all of the time, this has resulted in an increased dependence on commissioning places in the independent sector. Currently, there are over 450 children and young people with EHCPs being educated within the independent sector.
6. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of commissioned placements within the independent sector increased by over 50%. At the same time, the increasingly complex presentations of children and young people meant that the average unit cost of these placements also increased by 50%. Hence the total annual spend has tripled. However, the cost of individual placements can vary significantly from £30,000 to over £250,000 depending upon the complexity of presenting need and the type of specialist provision being sought to address it.
7. Since 2015, the County Council has increased the provision of special needs through the capital investment of £2.9m at Ash Lea Special School. The SEND Schools Strategic Growth Plan for 2019-2020 has agreed place funding at the following special schools:
 - a) Ash Lea – 10 additional places
 - b) Beech Academy – 10 additional places
 - c) Bracken Hill – 10 additional places
 - d) Carlton Digby – 18 places phased
 - e) Foxwood – 10 places
 - f) St Giles – 10 additional places.

In addition, the Council is currently investing £16.4m to rebuild and expand the Newark Orchard Special School which will initially create 40 new specialist placements.

8. Despite these expansions, there remains insufficient specialist places to allow parents to express a preference for a local special school, resulting in increased demand for county and out of county specialist placements.
9. A needs analysis undertaken in 2016 and reviewed in 2019 suggests that there is a need for specialist provision within the Hucknall and Ollerton areas. This report therefore seeks approval to undertake a feasibility study to identify a site in the Hucknall or Ollerton areas to build a new special school of 75 places.

Other Options Considered

10. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The County Council is required to secure a sufficiency of school places, which includes special school and specialist provision. There remains a shortfall of special school places hence the request to undertake a feasibility study to identify a site to build a new special school.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

13. The cost of the feasibility study will be £150,000. The feasibility study will be undertaken by Arc, and the costs for the feasibility study will be their costs. The feasibility study will need to consider the longer term financial benefits to the Local Authority of additional spaces in a special school resulting from the reduced reliance on the higher cost placements in non-maintained independent schools and reduced travel costs.

Implications for Service Users

14. It is recognised that more local education provision brings a range of benefits to children and young people and their families including improved opportunities for inclusion in the local community and reduced travel time.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

15. The anticipated reduced travel time will benefit the local environment.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee gives approval to undertake a feasibility study, at a cost of approximately £150,000, to identify a site in the Hucknall and Ollerton areas to build a new special school of 75 places.

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE
Leader of the County Council

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Constitutional Comments (EP 15/10/19)

16. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Policy Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (GB 23/10/19)

17. It is proposed that the £150,000 feasibility study costs will be funded from Nottinghamshire County Council capital resources in the first instance subject to a capital bid to the Corporate Asset Management Group. If the feasibility study works do not result in a capital project the costs incurred will be classed as abortive fees and will need to be funded from a revenue budget. If this is the case, these costs will be met from within the Corporate Property revenue budget.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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