

## **Final determination report to the Director of Children's Services**

**The Proposal: To relocate and expand Chapel Road Community Special School, Attleborough to a site\* in Old Buckenham to provide a total of 110 places in new-build premises.**

**(\*Grid reference: Easting: 606694 / Northing: 291906)**

Norfolk County Council is proposing to:

- Build a new 110 pupil place special school for students aged 3 – 19 and;
- Because of the unsuitability of the existing site and premises relocate the school. The relocation site is close to another primary and secondary school so that the school can develop as part of a wider educational campus in Old Buckenham.

These changes require a statutory process as the number of learners is increasing by over 10% of the school roll, and the school is transferring to a new site.

The four week period for representations ended on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2014. Three representations were received within the statutory notice period and one more was received in the week after.

In coming to a decision on proposals to make prescribed alterations to schools, the decision maker is required to address the following factors:

Consideration of consultations and representation period  
Education standards and the diversity of provision  
Demands  
School size  
Proposed admission arrangements  
National Curriculum  
Equal opportunity issues  
Community cohesion  
Travel and accessibility  
Capital  
School premises and playing fields

This report, to be read in conjunction with the prescribed information already published, and the report prepared for the Director of Children's Services requesting permission to proceed to Public Notice, will address each factor in turn.

### **1. Consideration of consultation and representation period**

Although there is no longer a pre-publication consultation period for a change of age range, the County Council carried out a six week consultation and invited all interested stakeholders to respond. This ended on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014. This included 2 public meetings, one held in Attleborough and one in Old Buckenham. Both were well attended. There was also an online survey on the NCC consultation portal.

66 respondents agreed with the proposal whilst 54 disagreed. 7 responses were from residents who neither agreed nor disagreed but made observations about encouraging interaction between the 3 schools and community use of the new facilities. Highway issues, including parking and a current lack of pathways/pavements which constituted health and safety issues for students and residents, were also cited by many respondents. A number of these were matters properly to be dealt with through the regulatory planning process.

The County Council received statutory Planning Consent for its proposed building on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014. A number of changes to the highways layout in the vicinity of the new school location have been made since the pre-planning consultation and were part of the approved planning application. These included an extension of the present 30mph limit to the village to incorporate the school entrance and a revision of the entrance arrangements to ensure that vehicles do not stack up out onto the highway.

Following publication of the Public Notice, the full proposal was published on the Norfolk County Council consultation portal. It was sent directly to parents of all pupils attending Chapel Road School and to other statutory consultees. Three representations were received within the statutory notice period (17<sup>th</sup> November – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2014) and one more was received in the week after.

The first was from the Diocesan Director of Education for Norwich Diocese who sent his 'best of wishes to Chapel Road School at Old Buckenham in this exciting time'.

The second was from Old Buckenham Parish Council (OBPC), who registered concerns on the following matters:

- Integration into the local community is critical for all schools to be able to work together in one village. Currently the CRS development is offering no contribution back to the local community or to existing pupils within the village.
- Road safety for pupils. OBPC believes this is an educational responsibility and funding should be provided to provide road safety measures specifically aimed at all children.
- A challenge to the numbers of respondents classed as in agreement when a conditional response was made. (ie agree to the proposal as long as the infrastructure is put in place).

Clarification was sought on a number of conditions:

1. That the central part of the school would be available for village functions and events.
2. That the multi-use games area (MUGA) be relocated so as to cause less impact to the village and that it too will be a village resource.
3. That the swimming pool will also be a resource for residents.

A third response was from a local resident who supported relocation but subject to the following conditions:

- That all of the concerns of OBPC are met re: highways, parking and safety aspects especially for shared access to ALL re new route to new proposed school. Plus any other concerns re educational matters emanating from OBPC.

- That the intention to integrate and share resources and learning aspects are shared between the "new" school and the other schools in Old Buckenham.
- That MUGA is available to all within planning approval and subject to new school overseeing the admin side of affairs.
- That the new school strives to achieve a more balanced gender re: teachers and teaching assistants to ensure a particular gender group does not lose out in their learning and Life skills development.

A fourth response received after the consultation closed was from a resident strongly in favour of the re-location of the school who would like to see the village, its local population and the three school populations, benefit more from the proposal. The respondent, who has an associated professional public health role, quoted the recent report from the Town and Country Planning Association 'Planning healthy-weight environments' which highlights how creating a healthy-weight environment can help with the raising epidemic of obesity and overweight issues currently seen within the UK population, both in adults and children. The report highlights how providing more opportunities for physical activities, such as walking or cycling to school, play spaces, leisure facilities, community and social infrastructure and providing safe links across spatial barriers such as busy roads, can influence a person's decision to lead a healthier life. This will ultimately impact and help reduce the risk factors that are linked to obesity which include diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

## **2. Education standards and the diversity of provision**

Chapel Road Complex Needs School currently provides 63 places for children and young people aged 3 to 19. It has been consistently judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

Chapel Road is a member of **TRUST Norfolk-SEN** a Mutual Special Schools Co-operative Membership Trust that exists solely to serve its member schools to facilitate excellence in teaching and learning; inclusion for children, families and staff; and to procure goods and services that offer best quality and value for money. It seeks to build on and strengthen, joint working within the existing Norfolk Association of Special School Headteachers (NASSH) to ensure a high quality learning experience for children and young people within the Norfolk-wide community. The Trust works closely with all relevant communities to raise aspirations and create opportunities and contribute fully to the life of those communities. The Trust provides a strong and well-tested legal entity through which to collaborate with partners for the benefit of students. Every learner will be empowered and enabled to lead an independent, healthy and fulfilling life.

## **3. Demand**

Chapel Road School is a county-wide facility, but will mainly cater for children from the south of the county. We want to reduce both the costs and the travel time of learners with special educational needs. The school buildings are in need of modernisation and a larger site is required to rebuild it to meet the future needs of its pupils. The new school will provide 47 more places in the south of the County.

#### **4. Size/Expansion**

The proposal is to build a new 110 pupil place school and relocate the building close to the two schools in Old Buckenham so that it can develop as part of a wider educational campus. Edubase will be updated following the completion of the statutory process.

#### **5. Proposed admission arrangements**

Admissions are via the current special school admissions process and referrals for places will be made by case-responsible Additional Needs Coordinators. This process has run in parallel to the statutory process and places are offered on an in principle basis, subject to the necessary statutory process being complete.

#### **6. National Curriculum**

Chapel Road School teaches six curriculum phases from Early Years Foundation Stage through to Post 16 (Sixth form). The school implements the National Curriculum, which is suitably adapted and modified to meet the complex and varied needs of its pupils.

The site has been identified close to Old Buckenham Primary School and Old Buckenham High School with the support of these schools, so that collaborative and shared curriculum activities can be developed. All three schools have worked closely together for many years and are in full support of each other and fully committed to joint learning and the use of a shared campus.

#### **7. Equal Opportunity Issues**

There is a gap in SEN provision in the south of the County for learners with special educational needs. The new school will provide 47 more places in the south of the County and will enable more learners who meet the complex needs school profile to be taught closer to their homes and prevent more costly placements in the non-maintained sector.

#### **8. Community Cohesion**

Schools have a part to play in providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other. The proposed development as part of a wider educational campus will enhance the impact of the good work already carried out by the school. The school is aware that it is leaving its historical base in Attleborough but will maintain connections with this community in a number of ways, including its community shop.

#### **9. Travel and Accessibility**

The County Council wants to ensure that it can cater for as many children with special educational needs as possible from the south of the County, to reduce their travel times and costs.

The planning application generated objections from Old Buckenham Parish Council and residents of Old Buckenham. Their concerns relate primarily to the impacts of the proposal on highways capacity & safety and with residential amenity. The impacts of the proposal were carefully considered, including the impact upon the open countryside, highways, archaeology, the public rights of way, design & visual amenity, landscape & trees, sustainability, drainage and ecology. There were no overriding objections from statutory consultees. The proposed development is in accordance with the development plan and national planning policy and considered to be acceptable subject to conditions and there are no issues of sufficient weight to justify a refusal. On these grounds the application was approved by the County Council's Planning Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

## **10. Capital**

Norfolk County Council has been granted £3.83m from the Department for Education for this project and the County Council has committed a further £8.02m of capital grant funding to meet the estimated costs of the project, including access requirements.

## **11. School Premises and Playing Fields**

Suitable outdoor space is available at the new location in Old Buckenham.

## **12. The Decision**

In considering proposals for a new school, the Decision Maker can decide to:

- Reject the proposals;
- Approve the proposal without modification;
- Approve the proposal with modifications, having consulted the governing body; or
- Approve the proposal – with or without modification - subject to certain prescribed events (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.

## **13. Conclusion and recommendation**

**That the decision maker approves the proposal with a modification, to relocate and expand Chapel Road Community Special School, Attleborough to a site in Old Buckenham to provide a total of 110 places in new-build premises. The modification being the acquisition by Norfolk County Council of the identified site for the school, and the completion of a successful construction tender process, by 31 March 2016\*.**

\*A revised programme has been drawn up on this basis and assumes a tender process will commence as soon as land achieved. If however, a further tender process is necessary, the revised programme will be approximately 12 months behind originally planned leading to an occupancy/implementation date of 1 September 2017. All opportunities to reduce this are currently being explored but are dependent on confirmation from the executors of the will in relation to timings to achieve probate. The implementation date is therefore modified to 1 September 2017.

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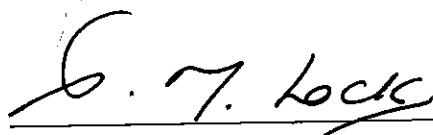
### **Determination**

I hereby **approve** this proposal to make prescribed alterations to the following schools to relocate and expand Chapel Road Community Special School, Attleborough to a site in Old Buckenham to provide a total of 110 places in new-build premises from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

**The approval is granted subject to the modification of the acquisition by Norfolk County Council of the identified site for the school, and the completion of a successful construction tender process, by 31 March 2016.**

The reasons for this decision are that:

- The statutory procedural requirements under section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 have been met
- The proposal meets the criteria laid down in statutory guidance in relation to the likely impact of the proposal on standards and school improvement, local choice and diversity, surplus places, community cohesion and equal opportunity
- The views of all interested parties, including those most likely to be affected, have been considered
- Account has been taken of unanticipated delays in programme development which were beyond the control of Norfolk County Council.



Date: 06 August 2015

Sheila Lock  
Interim Director of Children's Services  
Norfolk County Council