

**Essex County Council**  
**Equality Impact Assessment**

**Replacement of temporary accommodation at Cedar Hall School, Benfleet**

**1.0 Context**

1.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Essex County Council to have regard to the Public Equality Duty:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

1.2 The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage/civil partnership
- Pregnancy/maternity
- Race
- Religion/belief
- Gender and sexual orientation

1.3 In addition to the above protected characteristics ECC considers the cross-cutting elements of every proposed project and policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of the assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include

1.4 ECC uses the Equality Impact Assessment document as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what the Council does or is planning to do in the future. This exercise helps to identify where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

**2.0 Relevant Project**

2.1 This EIA refers to ECC's intention to replace a temporary accommodation at Cedar Hall special school, who have pupils with moderate learning

difficulties (MLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD), including those on the autistic spectrum, who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

### **3.0 Description of the Project**

- 3.1 The bid is driven by the Council's statutory obligation to provide a school place for each child residing in Essex whose parents/guardians request one. In addition, it meets the Council's corporate objectives to: deliver the best possible educational outcomes for children attending schools within its administrative border; improve public health and wellbeing across Essex and, safeguard vulnerable people of all ages,
- 3.2 Surveys of temporary classrooms known to be in poor condition were completed over summer 2019 across the county. The temporary classrooms at Cedar Hall School were deemed amongst the worst condition in the county and in need of urgent replacement.
- 3.3 There is evidence that significant investment would be required to ensure the temporary units are safe, which would only prolong their usable life for a short period of time. This accommodation cannot be written off and simply removed as the capacity of the schools would then be reduced, and this would not be a sustainable or acceptable solution.
- 3.4 to ensure sufficiency of permanent school places (i.e. meet basic need), to avoid wasteful short-term maintenance investment, and to adhere to planning requirements, these temporary classrooms should be replaced as soon as possible with fit-for-purpose permanent accommodation.
- 3.5 By providing purpose-built accommodation the school will be able to continue, and even improve, on the education and qualifications that they can offer pupils thus giving them greater opportunity once their education is completed.

### **4.0 Information on the population affected**

- 4.1 The replacement of the temporary accommodation will be designed to accommodate children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and will benefit current and future pupils attending the school from purpose built accommodation that caters for their needs and enables the school to continue in teaching the pupils and preparing them for their adult life beyond statutory education.
- 4.2 There is increased need for provision for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties in South Essex and the need to replace temporary classrooms, which have reached the end of their life cycle, will place considerable pressure on Cedar Hall School if not addressed. Demand for places at the school has grown over the years, due to population growth

and a rise in the number of children and young people who require a special school place, putting pressure on the school's infrastructure.

#### 4.3 Within Essex County Council:

- 15% of the school population has some sort of special need
- 3.4% of the school population currently has an Education, Health and Care Plan
- 2.1% of the school population has a Plan and is educated in mainstream schools, including specialist SEND units in mainstream schools
- 1.3% of the school population is educated in a special school

4.4 These percentages are subject to fluctuation; the trend has been upwards in recent years.

4.5 Pupil numbers at the school have been increasing steadily and at the same time the school has accommodated a wider range of special educational need; whilst classroom capacity has expanded the specialist spaces required to meet both increased numbers and a wider range of needs is not sufficient and needs to be addressed.

4.6 By providing permanent purpose-built accommodation pupils will not need to be sent out of county or to independently run education which will allow taxpayer's money to be spent efficiently within county. This is an essential strand of the Council's strategy to meet present and projected demand for special needs places and reduce the current dependence on expensive independent placements.

4.7 The strategy was developed in consultation with all schools, the Essex Special Schools Education Trust and the Schools Forum. The Schools Forum created an Invest to Save fund to help to increase the number of special needs places and therefore reduce the reliance on the independent sector.

### **5.0 Impact of the Decision to replace the temporary accommodation**

5.1 The replacement and build of the permanent provision will have a very positive impact on current and future children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities attending the special school.

5.2 The replacement of temporary accommodation will also benefit the wider population of children and young people with special educational needs as reduced reliance on expensive independent places will free up more funding to invest in the education of all children.

5.3 It is not anticipated that the proposed replacement would have a negative impact on any protected group.

**Report Author**

This report was prepared by Ralph Holloway Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation

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