

Bower Lane Special School



What we'll cover

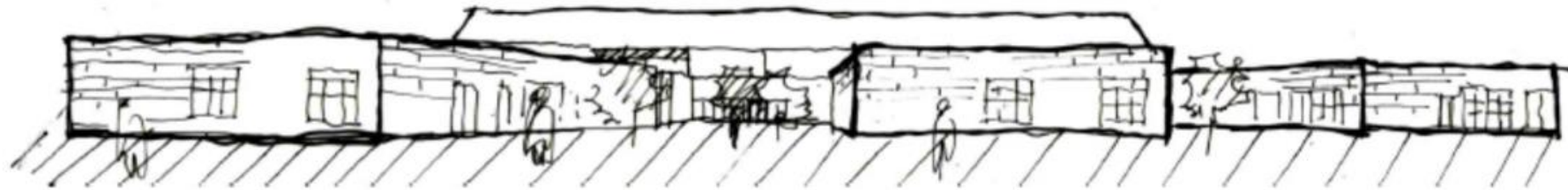
- Evidence of need
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Evidence of Need

Over the next 15 years, demand for special school places in the virtual catchment of Sedgemoor will continue to rise as housing developments are delivered and the population increases.

At present, both Penrose School and Elmwood School are full, meaning local children with complex SEND are not being educated in their local community, but need to be transported to other parts of Somerset, and neighbouring counties, at significant financial and environmental cost.



Options Considered

Feasibility studies were undertaken at both Penrose and Elmwood in order to understand the cost and deliverability of expanding both schools – neither were deemed to be cost effective due to site constraints and other factors.

Coupled with that, Bridgwater will need a significant amount of additional secondary school places and on that basis, the most cost effective option was deemed to be the delivery of a new replacement special school for Bridgwater, with current accommodation at Robert Blake Science College (Elmwood) and Chilton Trinity School (Elmwood – Jean Rees) being converted in to mainstream secondary school places.



Options Considered

A number of local authority owned sites in and around Sedgemoor were considered for the new school, but only one was deemed to be suitable in terms of its proximity to the main population centre (reducing travel time and costs), size and dimensions (needed to accommodate what will be a large special school).

Its proximity to Bridgwater and the key residential areas of Bower, Sydenham and Kings Down will mean children living in those areas will be able to access the school using existing pedestrian networks.

It will also enable parents to have better access to the school to engage with staff and other professionals and make use of the enhanced facilities the new school will provide.



Local First

The new school will accommodate 160 children aged 4 – 16. The existing Penrose School will accommodate Post-16 provision for a further 20-30 CYP.

This will enable the local authority to reduce its reliance on independent and non-maintained special schools.

Handover of existing accommodation to Robert Blake and Chilton Trinity will realise around 500 additional secondary school places.



Local First

By expanding a maintained special school, Somerset is able to accommodate local children with complex SEND in a school where the average annual cost to the High Needs Budget is £25,000. By comparison, placements for a child with similar needs in an INMSS would cost £50,000 - £55,000 annually.

On that basis, the additional capacity (60-70 places) when full, would see annual cost avoidance / savings of around £1.95m in placement costs alone.

Additional transport savings would also be significant.



Summary

This project is not just the delivery of a school for teaching and learning, it's the delivery of a place that will, for some of our most vulnerable children and their families, provide safety and security, warmth and compassion, hope and inspiration, excitement and adventure.

Our ambition for this school and the children who will attend it is demonstrated not only in the level of investment we have committed, but in the thought and energy that has gone in to the design.

The aspirations of the children and their families will not be limited by the schools we educate them in.

