

REPORT TITLE: Special schools – update on the rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School and College

Meeting:	Children’s Scrutiny Panel
Date:	28 April 2025
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Amanda Pinnock & Cllr Viv Kendrick
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No N/A
Purpose of Report To provide a progress report on the rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School and College as part of our strategy to secure sufficient places for Learners in Kirklees.	
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That this report is noted. 	
Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a key element of the councils ‘SEND The Big Plan’ ensuring our children and young people in Kirklees with additional needs are educated locally. 	
Resource Implications: £46.6M allocation in the Capital Plan for the rebuild of the two schools	
Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name	Tom Brailsford 11 April 2025
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Shard for information 11 April 2025
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?	Shared for information 11 April 2025

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Yes

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The council has committed to the rebuild and expansion of two special schools, Joseph Norton Academy and Woodley School and College. This is one part of our overall strategy to enable Kirklees Children to be educated in their local area.
- 1.2 Significant progress has been made with each project, working in partnership with local education partners and existing pupils at each school.
- 1.3 The design phases are nearing completion and artists impressions of each new school building are available.
- 1.4 Work is expected to start on both new sites by June 2025.

2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 We are passionate about every child in Kirklees having the best start in life and achieve their best. A key strand of the SEND Transformation Strategy 'SEND The Big Plan' is 'Enough of the right stuff' which includes sufficient special school places.
- 2.2 In October 2021, Kirklees Cabinet agreed an ambitious plan to rebuild and expand two existing special schools, Joseph Norton Academy, and Woodley School and College. Not only will the plan provide modern facilities for existing pupils, but the schools will also be built to accommodate more pupils to address growing demand.
- 2.3 This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, that proposes to secure and build on the capacity and expertise which exists in local state-funded special schools to continue to support children and young people's needs by ensuring we have high quality, fit for purpose facilities that can support a wide range of need within a sustainable delivery model
- 2.4 For Joseph Norton the plan is to build a school with a capacity for 132 pupils on Deighton Road, Huddersfield making provision for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs
- 2.5 For Woodley the plan is to build a school with a capacity for 180 pupils on the Fernside Avenue site in Almondbury with Complex Communication and Interaction/Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- 2.6 The rebuild of two special schools continues to complement and deliver on the Council's 2025/26 priorities:
 - Getting the basics right - a balanced budget and a modern organisation — saving money on expensive independent provision and improving local services for children and young people.
 - Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion - the investment in new build special schools will provide the right support at the right time in the right place.
 - Thriving people and communities - now and over the longer-term – the investment in new build special schools will serve Kirklees residents for decades to come. Energy efficient new build special schools will support our vision for a 'net zero and climate ready Kirklees by 2038'.
 - Local economic growth, working with regional and national partners - continuing to invest in our towns and villages

2.7 The rebuild of Joseph Norton Academy

- 2.7.1 In July 2024 a report to Kirklees Cabinet outlined the progress made with the design of the new school building and the granting of planning approval.
- 2.7.2 Since then, a procurement process has been completed which has led to the appointment of a construction partner. A Pre-construction service agreement (PCSA) has been developed to confirm construction details and pricing.
- 2.7.3 The design for the school building has been a collaborative process, with input from engagement with children from the school at the forefront, as well as close consultation with the local community and ward members.
- 2.7.4 A programme of pre-commencement works is currently underway with the construction partner, working closely with officers from the Council's Children's and Growth & Regeneration Directorates and the Wellspring Academy Trust, who operate Joseph Norton Academy. This has included making minor changes to the design and construction of the building to improve value for money. Care has been taken to ensure that any proposed changes will not impact upon the functioning of the building or learning environment for the children.
- 2.7.5 A planning application associated with the design changes has been submitted and an outcome is expected by the end of May 2025.
- 2.7.6 Groundworks and construction are due to commence on site in June 2025.
- 2.7.7 An artist's impression of the proposed building can be seen below:



- 2.7.8 Wellspring Academy Trust have completed the significant change process with the Department for Education. This confirms the increase in pupil numbers from 63 to 132 as well as the change of location for the school.

- 2.7.9 Plans are being developed with Wellspring for a phased growth strategy to build up to the planned pupil numbers and age ranges prior to occupying the new building. This may involve developing a temporary 'satellite' provision on another school site.
- 2.7.10 Detailed work such as the furniture and IT requirements for each room is underway leading up to the detailed planning which will be required for transition arrangements once construction has been completed.

2.8 **The rebuild of Woodley School and College**

- 2.8.1 In July 2024 a report to Kirklees Cabinet highlighted a number of key elements to the delivery of the new school building:
- Removal of telecom masts from the current building
 - Relocation of a private pre-school to Almondbury Library and Children's Centre
 - Exit of the site from the Public Private Partnership 'PP1' contact
 - An extensive demolition programme of existing buildings on site
 - The detailed design of the new school building
- 2.8.2 Since July 2024 the telecom masts have been removed and the private pre-school has been successfully relocated.
- 2.8.3 The exit of the of the PP1 contract is considered imminent with lender approval being the final stage to enable this.
- 2.8.4 A thorough procurement process has taken place leading to the appointment of a contractor to undertake the demolition and initial ground works. The contractor is on standby for mobilisation following the PP1 exit.
- 2.8.5 Detailed design of the new building has been a very positive and productive process involving the council, specialist design teams and school leaders from Woodley. The school leaders from Woodley know the needs of their children best and have been crucial to this process.
- 2.8.6 Direct engagement with pupils of the school has taken place in a programme of consultation about what is important to them in their new school buildings, and these findings have helped influence the design of new school building and its grounds.
- 2.8.7 An artist's impression of the proposed building can be seen on the following page:



2.8.8 Planning permission is expected in the coming weeks.

2.8.9 Work has started on the tendering process which will lead to the appointment of a main construction contractor.

2.8.10 A formal statutory process has been concluded leading to Cabinet approval to increase the places at Woodley School and College to 194. This includes 180 places at the new school building and 14 places at Blossom, Woodly's existing post-16 satellite provision in the Byram Arcade, Huddersfield. Implementation of the full 194 places was agreed to take place gradually over time.

2.8.11 Since this approval Woodley Moor temporary satellite provision has been established with 25 places available for primary aged pupils in Crosland Moor, by adapting an unused building. The current plan is for this to close when the pupils can transfer to the new school building.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

Working smart and delivering efficiently and efficiently – saving money on expensive independent provision and improving local services for children and young people. The investment in new build special schools will serve Kirklees residents for decades to come.

Working with people and partners using place-based approach – working with existing education partners, improving and providing the right support at the right time in the right place.

Complementing and delivering on 'Our Priorities' as detailed in 2.4 above.

3.2 Financial Implications

This is a significant investment for Kirklees. The council plan approved by Full Council on 5 March 2025 includes £46.6M allocation for the rebuild of the two schools.

3.3 Legal Implications

These are complex projects requiring significant support from the councils Legal Services. The removal of the telecoms mast which is complete and the exit from the PPP contract which should take place imminently are major legal milestones.

The Council must also comply with its obligations under section 149 of the Equalities Act and its public sector equality duty. Contracts for works and services will need to comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

The new buildings will contribute to the Council's Net Zero Carbon ambitions with air source heat pumps and extensive photovoltaic panels providing the heating and lighting for the schools, and it exceeds the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations.

3.5 Other (eg Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

Not applicable

4. Consultation

Formal statutory consultation has taken place leading up to the decision by Kirklees cabinet to increase the places at Woodley Schools and College to 194. A similar consultation has taken place to support a 'significant change' application to the Department for Education to increase the places at Joseph Norton Academy to 132, which was subsequently approved.

5. Engagement

- 5.1 There is very regular engagement with the senior leadership teams at both Woodley School and College, and Joseph Norton Academy, as well as the Wellspring Academy Trust.
- 5.2 Pupils from both schools have been engaged in a programme of consultation about what is important to them in their new school buildings, and these findings have helped influence the design of both new schools and their grounds.
- 5.3 Senior managers regularly engage with PCAN (Parents of Children with Additional Needs). PCAN is the parent-led forum for all parents and carers of children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with additional needs in Kirklees. PCAN is a key contact for the local authority to ensure that parents have their say in the design and delivery of local services for their children.
- 5.4 There is further engagement with our Local Area Partnership through the SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group.
- 5.5 Regular SEND newsletters are shared with wider stakeholders.
- 5.6 Ward members in both areas of the new sites are updated about key milestones.

6. Options

6.1 Options considered

Not applicable

6.2 Reasons for recommended option

Not applicable

7. Next steps and timelines

These have been included in the report where applicable

8. Contact officer

Joseph Norton rebuild project

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Woodley rebuild project

Martin Wilby – Head of Education Places and Access
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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

5 October 2021 Kirklees Council Cabinet Report

[Capital investment and rebuild of 2 Special Schools](#)

SEND The Big Plan – Dec 2023

[SEND - The Big Plan! | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer](#)

12 March 2024 Kirklees Council Cabinet Report

[Increasing special school places for children with complex autism at Woodley School & College - final decision](#)

9 July 2024 Kirklees Council Cabinet Report

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) – Capital Investment in the rebuild of two special schools](#)

SEND The Big Plan – What are we doing next - 2025

[SEND The Big Plan - What we are doing next - 2025 | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer](#)

10. Appendices

Not applicable

11. Service Director responsible

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