

Appendix 3

1. Westfields decision making process

March 2023 - DfE confirmed that we had been successful in bidding for two new free special schools which would provide two x 60 places 'all through' schools. Both schools would be funded and delivered by the DfE. 2 sites were Cledford House and Giantswood at Congleton. The Giants wood site is a local Plan site, subject to a s106 agreement but not transferred to CEC, the proposal was that a new Primary school and SEN school would share the site.

Autumn 2023 - At the pre-engagement event potential sponsors advised that due to capacities and all through age range, these new SEND schools would not be viable. Also, the DfE raised concerns over the Giantswood site this included ownership, varying site levels and shared site with a mainstream primary setting. At this stage we commenced with looking for other options.

30 November 2023, Corporate Policy committee approved the recommendation to progress with the closure of Westfields but retain Macclesfield Town Hall and Delamere House. This decision was made to enable the reduction in the number of operational offices but maintain the office space needed to support the workforce.

January 2024 - A HLBC to repurpose Westfields as a SEN school was approved by CLT.

The HLBC evidenced that once the new school was full, at 120 places, there would be an estimated saving of £4.56m per year against the DSG management plan. Whereupon selling the building would generate a one-off capital receipt of between £3.3m and £4.95m (info from Jan 2024). The reuse of the site provides a long-term financial benefit.

March 2024, a revised bid was submitted and agreed by the DfE to change the 2 x 60 place SEN schools to one new SEND free school offering 120 secondary age places located at Westfield site. This would be funded and delivered by the DfE.

29 April 2024 – Children and Families Committee supported the proposal that Westfields is used as a SEN Free School to then enable the proposal to be presented at Economy and Growth Committee in June

3 June 2024 - Children and Families Committee agreed £1m of the High Needs Capital Grant funding could be vired to facilities, to support the transfer out of Westfields.

4 June 2024 - Economy and Growth Committee approved and supported the principle that Westfields be developed as a new SEND free school.

31 December 2024 - Westfields building was fully vacated.

2. Rational for using Westfields

We have worked closely with colleagues in Assets to identify alternative sites, and in terms of space, location and ownership, Westfields is the only viable site to enable the delivery of this number on places from 1 location and within the timescales required. The size of the school at 144 places will also make it financially viable to operate.

Site is in the ownership of CEC.

Based on initial feasibility the building will be refurbished and remodelled, there will not be a requirement to extend and there is sufficient space for external areas and car parking. We

are looking to develop the scheme to offer 144 places, this is based on a 12 pupils per year group with the same class size.

The scheme would support our children, families and communities across the borough in terms of providing additional SEN places for our most vulnerable pupils.

The scheme would provide additional jobs and support the local economy. For a school this size we would anticipate 100 + staff, plus visiting specialist staff and medical support teams.

Centrally located within the borough – this will support the reduction in travel time for learners and the associated transport costs.

The economic and financial case for the Westfield option is centred on reducing the existing pressure on the DSG and also revenue budget in terms of transport costs.

On average it currently costs the Council £64,000 is the average per pupil cost, for a SEND placement, per annum, at an independent special school (ISS) against an average per pupil cost of £25,000 at a Cheshire East Special School. This equates to a per placement/pupil cost benefit of £39,000 per annum plus an additional sum for transport (transport savings are difficult to quantify given each pupil's journey is different but this is also expected to be a considerable saving).

Assessing the benefits over 10 yr period, based on a fully occupied school of 144 places, then the proposal for the SEND School option would save the Council circa £56.160m.

$$64,000 - 25,000 = £39,000$$

$$39,000 \times 144 = £5,616,000$$

$$5,616,000 \times 10 = £56,160,000$$

Key Risks

Costs – *Instruction to progress to RIBA stage 4 needs to be issued to Property and Assets Team as soon as approvals from committee is achieved. A detailed brief to be developed and the client/property team to work closely with the design team to achieve the budget of £16m.*

Achieving approval for planning and any statutory processes – *Start early engagement with planning to ensure that the planning application is robust*

Appointment and approval of a sponsor – *The Free school presumption process needs to commence as soon as approvals from committee is achieved.*

Opening for September 2028/January 2029 – *A realistic and detailed programme needs to be drawn up to assess viability of this and will need input from planning colleagues*

1. Safety Valve Capital Funding/High Needs Provision Capital

Jan 2024 Cheshire East submitted its application for **Safety Valve Capital Funding**

May 2024 – Notified that the total approved funding was £16,574,250, this included: -

- 2 x 60 place primary special schools (satellite of an existing specialist school) – Cledford House (budget allocated £6,000,000) and reuse of the former Vernon Infant site or St Gregory's (budget allocated £9,000,000)
- 1 x 20 place expansion of Springfield, Wilmslow – Scheme due on site early 2026 (estimated £1,000,000)
- 1 x 14 place new SEN unit (Leighton Primary) - Unit is now operational and capacity is 20 pupils (cost £210,000)

3 June 2024 - Children and Families Committee agreed the inclusion of the above schemes in the Children and Families Capital Programme.