

Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment for the Proposal to expand and change the designation of the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary from a designation of MLD to a designation of ASD

Did you use the EIA Screening Tool?

Yes

1. Explaining the matter being assessed

This is a:

- Change to a service or function

Ashford Park Primary School is a 3-form entry primary school with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Unit in the borough of Spelthorne in Surrey. The school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in a full inspection in December 2014 and sustained a 'Good' in a short inspection in September 2018. This consultation is a proposal to secure places for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs by changing the designation of the SEN Unit from MLD to ASD. The SEN Unit will expand from 21 planned places to 25 planned places. A feasibility study has informed the development approach required to repurpose, remodel and expand the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School to ensure long-term sustainability.

The proposal will impact:

- Pupils currently attending Ashford Park Primary School
- Staff at Ashford Park Primary School
- Parents and families of pupils currently attending Ashford Park Primary School or likely to attend the school in the future.

How does your service proposal support the outcomes in [the Community Vision for Surrey 2030](#)?

- Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident
- Everyone benefits from education skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life
- Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life

Are there any specific geographies in Surrey where this will make an impact?

- Spelthorne

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Assessment team

Detail here who you have involved with completing this EIA:

- Rachael Wardell, Surrey County Council, Executive Director Children Families and Learning
- Liz Mills, Surrey County Council, Director of Education and Learning
- Jane Winterbone, Surrey County Council Assistant Director of Education
- Eamonn Gilbert, Surrey County Council, Assistant Director Commissioning
- Jodi Emery, Surrey County Council, Service Manager, Commissioning
- Mike Singleton, Surrey County Council, Service Manager, Education Place Planning
- Emily George, Surrey County Council, Assistant Director, SEND Transformation
- Emilie Williams Jones, Surrey County Council, Programme Manager SEND Capital Programme
- Jane Keenan, Surrey County Council, Commissioning Manager, Education Place Planning
- Sarah Tarrant, Ashford Park Primary School, Headteacher
- Liz Down, Ashford Park Primary School, Chair of Governing Body
- Surrey County Council Capital Programme Board

Consultation Information:

Surrey County Council and Ashford Park Primary School consulted on the proposal to expand the SEN unit (known as the Acorn Centre) at Ashford Park Primary School from 21 to 25 places and change the designation from MLD to a designation of ASD^[1].

The aim of the consultation was to seek views on the proposal from all interested parties, particularly from pupils and their families who attend Ashford Park Primary School, pupils and their families who may attend the school in the future, and the views of the local community.

The informal consultation was open from 27 September to 6 November 2022. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively email or post responses.

An online public meeting was held 13 October 2022 at 6pm.

There were 9 responses to the consultation.

¹ 1 Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the term used by the Department for Education (DfE) as the school designation that meets the needs of autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs. Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) is the DfE school designation, known locally in Surrey as Learning and Additional Needs (LAN).

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Do you agree with the proposal to expand the SEN Unit Ashford Park Primary School from 21 to 25 places and change the designation from MLD to a designation of ASD

9 (100%) respondents agreed with the proposal.

The informal consultation analysis is published on the statutory notices page at [Surrey Says](#)

Statutory Notices were published from 14 November – 12 December 2022. The associated documentation was published on the [SurreySays Website](#) and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively email or post responses.

There were 11 responses to the consultation. 9 respondents agreed with the proposal to expand the SEN unit and change the designation from MLD to ASD and 2 disagreed with the proposal.

Respondents had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey. Out of 11 respondents 5 left comments.

Positive Impacts

4 out of 5 respondents mentioned the positive impacts of expanding the SEN Unit, commenting on the need for more school places and specialist provision for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs.

“This is a key SEND provision which will meet the needs of local children and their families which is much needed in Spelthorne and the NE of Surrey.”

“Its will be of great help to support parents and kids with Autism. Especially given a specialist provision is not available in the 20 mile radius.

“I totally agree with the unit expanding. There is not enough places available at the moment. The school has outstanding teachers in the unit and so many more children will benefit from having some time in mainstream and in a unit..... The school definitely has enough space and will not affect anything else my expanding their unit.”

Negative Impacts

2 respondents commented on the proposed expansion having a potential negative impact on other children attending the school.

“I fear that children without ASD will have less educational attention to support them when children with ASD will clearly require increased support.”

“So many Autistic children need specialist education and there are few useful resources in Surrey.....I think the changes will be positive overall. However, I do worry that the children with other learning difficulties outside of autism may suffer the consequence of the changes. I am also thinking that the class size may be too big to manage effectively.”

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2. Service Users / Residents

Who may be affected by this activity?

There are 9 protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) considered in the proposal. These are:

1. Age including younger and older people
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
6. Religion or belief including lack of belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage/civil partnerships

Though not included in the Equality Act 2010, Surrey County Council recognises that there are other vulnerable groups which significantly contribute to inequality across the county and therefore they should also be considered within EIAs. If relevant, you will need to include information on the following vulnerable groups.

- Members/Ex members of armed forces
- Adult and young carers*
- Those experiencing digital exclusion*
- Those experiencing domestic abuse*
- Those with education/training (literacy) needs
- Those experiencing homelessness*
- Looked after children/Care leavers*
- Those living in rural/urban areas
- Those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage*
- Out of work young people)*
- Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism*
- People with drug or alcohol use issues*
- People on probation
- People in prison
- Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers
- Sex workers
- Children with Special educational needs and disabilities*
- Adults with long term health conditions, disabilities (including SMI) and/or sensory impairment(s)*
- Older People in care homes*
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities*
- Other (describe below)

(*as identified in the Surrey COVID Community Impact Assessment and the Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy)

Impacts have been identified under the protected characteristics **Age including younger and older people** and **Disability**. The following vulnerable groups have also been identified, **Children with Special educational needs and disabilities** and **those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage**.

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Disability

(Including Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Adult and Young carers)

Pupils at the school

There are 615 pupils currently on roll at the school. Pupils currently attending the Acorn Centre SEN Unit are included in this number.

Table 1: Number of pupils on roll at Ashford Park Primary School by National Curriculum Year (NCY) Group (September 2022)

	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Number of pupils currently at Ashford Park Primary School	92	91	89	89	88	91	82	615

Pupils who may attend the school in the future

It is proposed that:

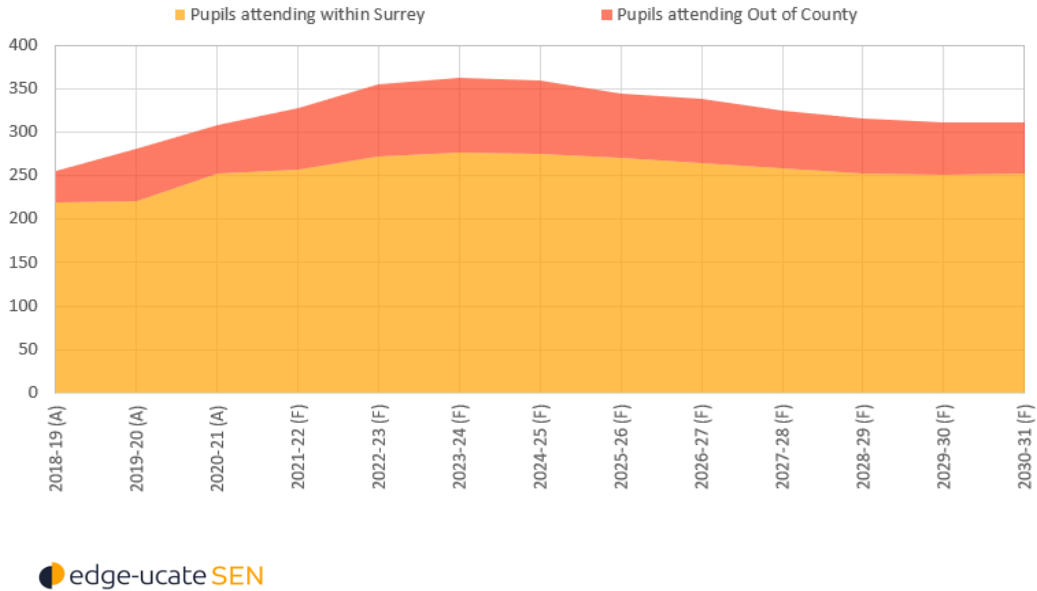
1. The school designation changes from MLD (known locally in Surrey as Learning and Additional Needs (LAN)) to a designation of ASD (school designation for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs).
2. The SEN Unit will expand from 21 places to 25 places to allow an additional intake in Key Stage 2. There will be 9 places in Year R to Year 2 and an extra intake of 1 place at the key stage transfer in in Year 3 to create 16 places in Year 3 to Year 6.
3. There will be no change to the mainstream provision.

Places will be accessed through the EHCP process.

Graph 1 shows North East projections indicate 17% growth in the total number of autistic pupils and those with communication & interaction needs, with EHCPs who need a specialist school or SEN unit place from 2020-21 (309) to the peak in 2023-24 (363), with an 11% growth remaining in 2025/26 (345).

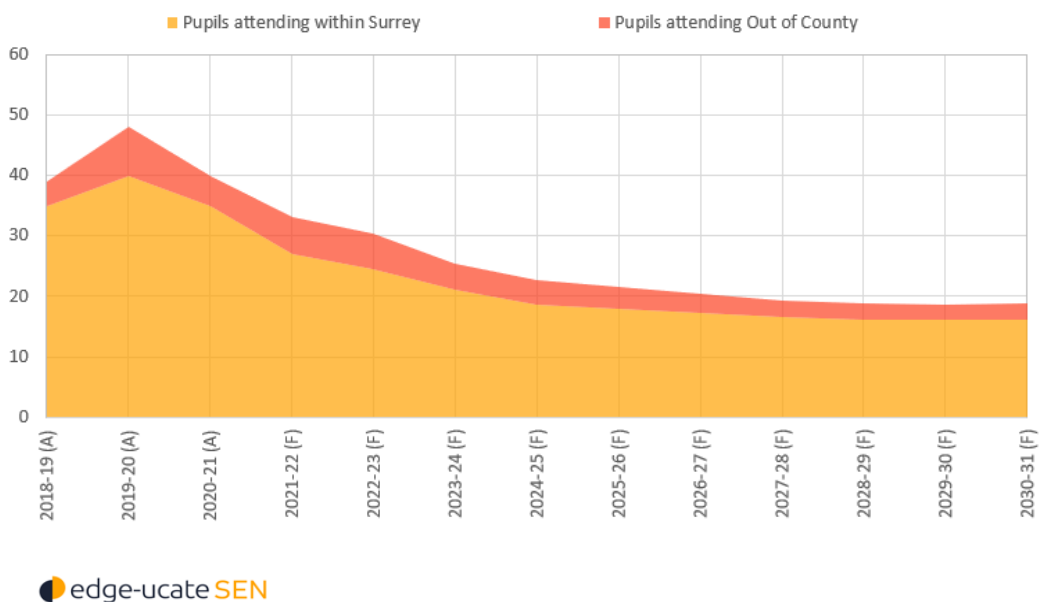
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Graph 1: North East: Forecast of demand for specialist school and SEN Unit places from Year R to Year 6 for pupils with an EHCP with a primary need of autism or communication and interaction needs



Graph 2 shows that North East projections indicate -53% decrease in demand in the total number of pupils with the primary need Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in their EHCP, who need a specialist school or SEN unit place from 2020-21 (40) to 19 in 2030/31 (19).

Graph 2: North East - Forecast of demand for specialist school and SEN Unit places from Year R to Year 6 for pupils with an EHCP with a primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)



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Positive Impacts:

- The expansion will provide specialist education for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs who would also benefit from being part of a wider mainstream school community.
- Changing the designation of the school would mean more places for pupils with a primary need of ASD and therefore more pupils with a primary need of ASD educated closer to home.
- A school place that is closer to home will positively impact students, parents and carers who will have the opportunity to be part of a school community closer to home as well as reducing potential travel time for centre students and their families.

The Report to Surrey County Council on 25 January 2022 [Developing Local Special Educational Needs And Disability \(Send\) Provision In Surrey To Meet Demand From 2023/24 Onwards](#) outlines the delivery of additional specialist school places and intended benefits to Surrey's children, young people and residents:

1. Benefits realisation ensures Surrey's maintained specialist education provision is fit for purpose and creates additional employment/supported internship opportunities for residents around areas of expansion.
2. Children, young people, and families can access the same level of high-quality support wherever they live in Surrey. We have a good, shared understanding of our children and young people who have SEND in Surrey and our support offer matches their identified needs.
3. Expanding Surrey's specialist provision aligns with the Preparation for Adulthood programme and strategy for Post-16 to create local further education and employment pathways such as apprenticeships and supported internships. This enables young people who have SEND to make a successful transition to adulthood and secure employment.
4. Capacity created locally will also make certain that SEND home to school transport distance and costs are reduced so that pupils attend their closest most appropriate school with shorter journey times. Opportunities for developing independent travel skills can be maximised as a result of children and young people being educated closer to home. This will also address local congestion around school sites as well as traffic flow around the county, which will be of benefit to Surrey's Green Agenda
5. The distribution and occupancy of current Specialist Schools and SEN Units in mainstream schools clearly illustrates that there is insufficient provision of Autism and Communication & Social Interaction Needs, Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Social Emotional Mental Health Needs Special places.
6. The approved remodification and expansion programme will ensure that additional places are matched appropriately to need type, phases of education and geographic locations.

Travel patterns

The additional places at Ashford Park Primary School will help reduce the percentage of pupils with communication and interaction needs who travel out of borough, quadrant and county and will reduce the number of pupils educated in independent provision.

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In Surrey 68% of pupils with Communication and Interaction needs travel 6 miles or more for education, the percentage is higher in Spelthorne (76%). Alongside this there are fewer pupils with Communication and Interaction needs in Spelthorne who are educated in the **borough** they live (6%) compared to all of Surrey (28%); and in the **quadrant** they live in (20%) compared to all of Surrey (50%).

Table 3: Pupils living in Spelthorne: Current travel patterns for pupils from Year R to Year 11 who are educated in a Specialist School

Need Type	Educated in Borough/District	Educated in Quadrant	Educated Out of County	Educated in Independent provision	Travel 6 Miles or More for Education
Cognition	12%	34%	13%	15%	50%
SEMH	0%	0%	42%	31%	96%
Communication & Interaction	6%	20%	36%	31%	76%
Sensory & Physical	0%	0%	43%	57%	86%
Total	7%	20%	30%	26%	72%

Table 5: Pupils living in Surrey (whole county): Current travel patterns for pupils from Year R to Year 11 who are travelling to specialist school places

Need Type	Educated in Borough/District	Educated in Quadrant	Educated Out of County	Educated in Independent provision	Travel 6 Miles or More for Education
Cognition	33%	58%	10%	17%	52%
SEMH	14%	31%	33%	42%	85%
Communication & Interaction	28%	50%	19%	36%	68%
Sensory & Physical	17%	36%	48%	39%	76%
Total	27%	49%	19%	31%	66%

Potential Negative Impact:

2 out of the 11 respondents to the statutory notices **disagreed** with the proposal, with one respondent leaving comment on the **possible adverse impact** upon children attending the school that do not have an ASD diagnosis.

“I fear that children without ASD will have less educational attention to support them when children with ASD will clearly require increased support”

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

A Question and Answer document has been published to answer any questions and address potential negative impacts, the full document is published at www.surreysays.co.uk on the Statutory Notices Consultation page.

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	Question	Response
1.	Where in the school is the proposed new building?	The Acorn Centre will move into a new block/modular building which will be built within the school site. The current classrooms will be repurposed and remodelled.
2.	What building work is needed? Will there be any disruption?	<p>A feasibility study has informed the development approach required to repurpose, remodel and expand the centre at Ashford Park Primary School to ensure long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The majority of the building works will take place over the summer holidays to ensure minimal disruption to pupils and staff. The project team will work closely with school staff to keep staff, parents and pupils informed of plans and timelines.</p>
3.	Why is a new building required for the Acorn Centre?	<p>A feasibility study has been completed to ensure correct capacity for a formal change in designation to support autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs.</p> <p>The SEN Unit expanded in Sept 2018 from 16 places to 21 places but there was no additional building work at that time. The mainstream Published Admission Number (PAN) had already expanded in 2015 from 2 form to 3 form entry and only reached capacity with 3 forms across each year group in 2021 therefore there was some additional capacity across the school until September 2021. Temporary accommodation is in place until the proposed building is completed.</p>
4.	What will happen to the existing Junior children in the unit who have a primary need of MLD?	<p>There is no planned change for existing pupils at the school. Pupils with a primary need of MLD will continue their primary school education at The Acorn Centre at Ashford Park Primary and will receive the level of support as outlined in their EHCP plan.</p> <p>Any changes in a pupils needs would be considered as part of the annual review of their EHCP according to the SEND Code of Practice and is not impacted by this proposal.</p>

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5.	Where will children with a primary need of MLD, who need a specialist provision in the local area attend school in the future?	<p>Forecasts across the north east and north west of Surrey indicate that the demand for MLD places is decreasing.</p> <p>Pupils with a primary need of MLD may be supported within their local mainstream school, a SEN Unit in a mainstream school or a Specialist School. The nearest mainstream school with an MLD SEN Unit is The Hythe, 3 miles from Ashford Park Primary.</p>
6.	Will there be any change to the provision or way in which the children in the unit are currently supported?	<p>Autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs are already supported as pupils of The Acorn Centre at Ashford Park Primary School. The consultation formalises the offer so the places will be available for autistic pupils in the future.</p>
7.	Will all children at the school benefit from the SEN Unit?	<p>Developing a sustainable offer to support autistic pupils and those with communication needs will benefit the whole school. The Acorn Centre is part of Ashford Park Primary School under the same leadership and governance.</p> <p>The school will continue to support all pupils in the school, and all staff will benefit from shared learning and resources that will influence how pupils are supported across the school.</p> <p>All pupils attending the SEN Unit will have been allocated a place through the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP process). Pupils will be allocated a place at the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary by Surrey County Council's SEND Admissions Team. Please see the School Admissions Guidance for children with an EHCP for more information.</p>
8.	How much learning and integration do children in the SEN Unit experience in mainstream classes?	<p>The Acorn Centre offers opportunities for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs who would benefit from spending approximately 40-60% of their school day each week in mainstream classes with support. This enables meaningful inclusion into the mainstream classes which is wholly individualised to the needs of the pupil. Some pupils may spend more time in the Acorn Centre than others and it would be the responsibility of the school to manage the specialist offer and</p>

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		inclusion levels in partnership with the parents and Local Authority officers.
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What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

The development of the proposed SEN unit at Ashford Park Primary School is part of the strategy developed by Surrey County Council to expand the specialist education estate by more than 2,300 places to meet projected demand in the long-term.

SEND Capital Programme Cabinet Report 25 January 2022:

[Developing Local Special Educational Needs and Disability \(Send\) Provision in Surrey to Meet Demand From 2023/24 Onwards](#)

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

No

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Age including younger and older people

The proposal positively impacts autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs aged 4 years to 11 years old who need a specialist school place with access to inclusion in a mainstream school.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

N/A

What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

The proposed SEN unit at Ashford Park Primary School is part of the strategy developed by Surrey County Council to expand the specialist education estate by more than 2,300 places to meet projected demand in the long-term.

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Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

No

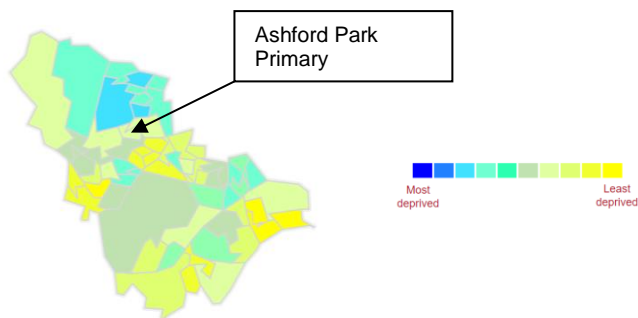
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Socio economic disadvantage

[The Indices of deprivation 2019](#) finds that 14 out of 60 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Spelthorne are between 20% - 40% most deprived area in the country. This means that they are more deprived areas than between 60% and 80% of England. 19 out of 60 areas are more deprived than 50% of England.

Figure 1: English Index of Multiple Deprivation Spelthorne and Runnymede

Map of Spelthorne



Source: Indices of deprivation 2019 in Surrey by Surrey-i helpdesk

Positive impact: More families will be able to access Specialist School provision closer to home. (See the [current travel patterns](#) on page 7)

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

Placements co-ordinated through the SEND admissions process will place pupils at the appropriate placement identified through the Education Health and Care Plan. Additional local places will mean more pupils will be able to attend provision local to home.

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What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

The development of the proposed expansion and change of designation to Ashford Park Primary School is part of the strategy developed by Surrey County Council to expand the specialist education estate by more than 2,300 places to meet projected demand in the long-term.

SEND Capital Programme Cabinet Report 25 January 2022:

[Developing Local Special Educational Needs and Disability \(Send\) Provision in Surrey to Meet Demand From 2023/24 Onwards](#)

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

No

3. Staff

Any impacts for staff with protected characteristics will be considered by the Governing Body of Ashford Park Primary School.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

Communication and consultation with staff throughout the decision-making process.

What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

The proposed expansion of the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School is part of the strategy developed by Surrey County Council to expand the specialist education estate by more than 2,300 places to meet projected demand in the long-term.

SEND Capital Programme Cabinet Report 25 January 2022:

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Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

No.

4. Recommendation

Based your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers. You should explain your recommendation below.

- **Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.** This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken
- **Outcome Two: Adjust the policy/service/function** to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better advance equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers you identified?
- **Outcome Three: Continue the policy/service/function** despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to advance equality identified. You will need to make sure the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You need to consider whether there are:
 - Sufficient plans to stop or minimise the negative impact
 - Mitigating actions for any remaining negative impacts plans to monitor the actual impact.
- **Outcome Four: Stop and rethink the policy** when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (For guidance on what is unlawful discrimination, refer to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance and Codes of Practice on the Equality Act](#) concerning employment, goods and services and equal pay).

Recommended outcome:

- **Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.** This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken (**do we need to address negative impact concerns?**).

Explanation:

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No negative equalities impacts have been identified.

5. Action plan and monitoring arrangements

There is no current action plan as no negative impacts have been identified

6a. Version control

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
0.1	Draft	Kim O'Malley	27 September 2022
0.2	Amendments to draft at end of Informal Consultation	Kim O'Malley	23 November 2022
0.3	Final draft version at the end of the Statutory Notice period	Jane Keenan	10 January 2023
1	Final version for Cabinet Member Meeting	Jane Keenan	20 January 2023

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6b. Approval

Secure approval from the appropriate level of management based on nature of issue and scale of change being assessed.

Approved by	Date approved
Head of Service - Liz Mills	
Executive Director – Rachael Wardell	19/01/2023
Cabinet Member – Clare Curran	31/01/2023
Directorate Equality Group – Liz Mills	

EIA author: Jane Keenan, Commissioning Manager, Education Place Planning

6c. EIA Team

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Team Role
Jane Keenan	Commissioning Manager	SCC	Author, Project Manager
Kim O'Malley	Commissioning Assistant	SCC	Project Group member
Emilie Williams Jones	Programme Manager, SEND Capital Programme	SCC	Programme Manager
Sarah Tarrant	Headteacher	Ashford Park Primary	Service Expert
Liz Down	Chair of Governors	Ashford Park Primary	Service Expert
Liz Mills	Director of Education and Learning	SCC	Sponsor

If you would like this information in large print, Braille, on CD or in another language please contact us on:

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