

**CABINET**

**19th November 2014**

**Subject: Glenwood School Consultation**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Riley – Leader of the Council**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

To advise the Cabinet of the proposals set out by Essex County Council on proposals to expand and rebuild the Glenwood School on the site of Montgomerie Primary School, including a 60 place specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision.

**2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives**

The proposals set out in the draft Flood Risk Management Plans will have implications for Council in terms of its *Transforming our Community* objective.

**3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Cabinet agree to submit the response set out at Section 8 of this report to the consultation on proposals for Glenwood School.

---

**4. Background**

4.1 Glenwood School is a community special school which caters for learners with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. It was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted in 2012 due to the quality of learning and care it provides to its learners.

4.2 At present the school has capacity for 100 learners aged 3 to 19 years. The school caters for learners with a complex range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. Approximately three quarters have severe learning difficulties and one quarter have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Approximately sixty percent of the learners are on the autistic spectrum and this proportion is increasing steadily. The school is currently operating over capacity with 120 learners on the school roll.

- 4.3 In 2010 the County Council consulted on a proposal to relocate and rebuild Glenwood School on The Deanes School site in conjunction with a proposed rebuild of The Deanes School.
- 4.4 Since 2010, the County Council's position in relation to the Deanes School has changed. There were proposals to close the Deanes School which were not supported by the Schools Adjudicator.
- 4.5 Given this change in position in relation to the Deanes School, the relocation of the Glenwood School to the Deanes site is no longer achievable.
- 4.6 However, rebuilding the Glenwood School has remained a high priority for the County Council and therefore other options have been considered. In May 2014, the County Council with the support of the governing bodies of Glenwood School and Montgomerie Primary School informed the community of the potential to rebuild Glenwood on land which is presently part of the Montgomerie Primary School site.
- 4.7 The consultation that is currently underway is a formal part of the consultation process with the community and stakeholders in relation to these proposals.
- 4.8 If the County Council decides to proceed with the proposals for the Glenwood School there would be further consultation and a planning application in 2015.

## **5. The Need for the Proposal**

- 5.1 The need for new accommodation for the Glenwood School comes from two sources. Firstly, the quality and capacity of the current school buildings, and secondly the need for additional school places for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties within the local area.
- 5.2 With regard to the current school buildings, they are less than ideal. The buildings are well maintained but over 50% of the teaching areas are in relocatable buildings with a lack of specialist areas and no space for increased working with parents and carers. In particular, some of the accommodation is not full accessible which affects innovation and impacts on the standard of care that can be provided. There is therefore a need to improve the quality of the buildings to provide for the current school roll.
- 5.3 Additionally, many of the learners travel to the school using community transport or in specially adapted vehicles and taxis. The external frontage cannot accommodate the needs of taxis and minibuses on site and the limited parking creates inconvenience for local residents.
- 5.4 With regard to the need for places for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties, the majority of learners at the school live within the Castle Point and Rochford area. Data shows that there are currently more learners with severe and profound learning difficulties residing in Castle Point and Rochford who could be placed appropriately at Glenwood than there are places available at the school. In addition new housing developments in the area, the increase of families with children with learning difficulties and the fact that the

school is popular and oversubscribed point to the need for more capacity at the school.

- 5.5 In addition to this, there has been a significant increase across Essex in the number of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) requiring special school places. There is however no maintained ASD specific special school provision in South Essex.
- 5.6 The intention of the proposals being put forward by Essex County Council is to address these issues of need by providing a new, bigger school that also incorporates specialist ASD places.

## **6. The Proposal**

- 6.1 The proposal is to rebuild Glenwood on part of the Montgomerie Primary School site in conjunction with Montgomerie Primary School reducing its size upon conversion to academy status to 210 places.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the 4.8 hectare site will accommodate the addition of a new build 150 place special school and 60 place ASD provision along with the consolidated primary school.
- 6.3 It is proposed that to accommodate both schools Montgomerie will use the front part of the site, the playing field to the side and the former junior school building which will be slightly enlarged and improved to provide the necessary accommodation for a 210 place school. The former infant building at the rear of the site will be demolished and a new Glenwood will be constructed.
- 6.4 Car parking and designated bus and mini bus drop off areas will also be provided. The schools will have independent sites but will share the existing Montgomerie entrance off Rushbottom Lane.
- 6.5 Glenwood will stay in its current accommodation until the new build is complete in August 2016. In addition the school will have temporary accommodation at SEEVIC College from September 2015 in order to increase their capacity from this date. This accommodation will be used for a number of the post-16 students to use until the new build is completed. Planning consent for the temporary accommodation at SEEVIC College was granted by this Council in October 2014.

## **7. The Implications of the Proposal**

- 7.1 The Montgomerie School site and the Glenwood School site are both located within the Metropolitan Green Belt immediately to the north of the site known as Land off Glebelands.
- 7.2 A previous application for housing development at Land off Glebelands was dismissed by the Secretary of State at appeal due to the moderate degree of harm it would cause to the Green Belt. In light of this appeal decision, it is necessary to consider the degree of harm to the Green Belt arising from any further development of the two schools.

- 7.3 Consideration should therefore be given to Green Belt policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and associated guidance set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in order to ensure that any response to this consultation is appropriate in relation to the Green Belt.
- 7.4 The NPPF is clear that development within the Green Belt would normally be considered to be harmful and should be refused. However, there are some exceptions to this. For example, the redevelopment of existing buildings within the Green Belt is exceptionally permitted by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where the new development would not impact to a greater degree than the existing building on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 7.5 The proposal for the Glenwood School focuses on the redevelopment of the existing infant school building at the Montgomerie School. Therefore, the proposal would constitute redevelopment. However, the new building is likely to be somewhat larger in order to accommodate 210 learners with special educational needs, and may therefore have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. These impacts could however be alleviated through good design which minimises the scale and massing of the building.
- 7.4 In addition to those exceptions specified within the NPPF, it also allows for local circumstances to be taken into account during the decision-taking process. The NPPF allows for developments to be exceptionally permitted within the Green Belt where very special circumstances exist which outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt.
- 7.5 Therefore, even if the scale and massing of the proposed development was such that it would affect the openness of the Green Belt, the decision could be taken that the need for special educational needs places within the local community provides the very special circumstances necessary to outweigh harm to the Green Belt.
- 7.6 It is therefore possible, having regard to the NPPF, to support the proposals for the Glenwood School without implying support for development generally within the strip of Green Belt in which the Montgomerie and Glenwood Schools are located.
- 7.7 It should be noted that the proposals will result in the existing Glenwood School being vacated in 2016. This building is located within the Green Belt, but could be re-used or redeveloped in accordance with the exceptions set out in the NPPF. There are currently no proposals in place for this building.

## **8. Suggested Consultation Response**

- 8.1 It is suggested that the following consultation response is issued in respect of the Glenwood School Consultation:

*The Borough Council recognises the need for the provision of school places for those with severe and profound learning difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Castle Point and Rochford areas.*

*The Borough Council is pleased that the County Council recognise this need and are prepared to support the Glenwood School in meeting local needs through the provision of new, high quality premises that have sufficient capacity, and space to develop innovative forms of learning.*

*The Borough Council is also pleased that the County Council is working with the Montgomerie school to re-use existing educational land and buildings, and to provide improved parking and drop off arrangements for both the Montgomerie and Glenwood Schools.*

*The Borough Council would however highlight that both the Montgomerie School and the Glenwood School are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and as such the redevelopment of the former infant school building to provide the new Glenwood School should be designed in such a manner as to maintain a sense of openness, and avoid harm to the Green Belt, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The Borough Council would be pleased to work with the County Council in order to ensure that this objective is achieved.*

*The Borough Council would also be pleased to work with the County Council and Glenwood School to ensure that the existing Glenwood School, to be vacated in 2016, is re-used or redeveloped in a manner that ensures the openness of the Green Belt and also achieves any wider community objectives.*

## **9. Corporate Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications for Castle Point Borough Council arising from the Glenwood School Consultation or the response suggested in section 8.

### **(b) Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications for Castle Point Borough Council arising from the Glenwood School Consultation or the response suggested in section 8.

### **(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications**

#### **Human Resources**

The recommendations of this report can be actions within existing human resources.

#### **Equality Implications**

The Glenwood School provides school places for those with severe or profound learning difficulties who would not flourish in a mainstream school. The expansion and improvement of this school increases the opportunity for those with these learning difficulties to access school places that meet their educational needs within the local area, and as such the proposals set out in the consultation document would enhance equality of opportunity. The suggested consultation response supports this proposal, thereby also supporting enhanced equality of opportunity.

**(d) IT and Asset Management Implications**

There are no IT or asset management implications arising from this report.

**10. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors**

A response to the consultation on the Glenwood School must be submitted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> December in order to receive consideration.

**11. Background Papers**

Glenwood School Consultation  
National Planning Policy Framework

**Report Author:** Amanda Raffaelli