



**Executive Advisory Panel – Future Communities
Education Capital Programme 2025
Monday 20th January 2025**

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Audience	Executive Advisory Panel – Future Communities
Purpose	Information ✓
Confidential	Official Internal ✓

1. Report Background

- 1.1. To update the Executive Advisory Panel on the progress made and proposed changes in approach that will provide a strategic overview of planning and commissioning school places in North Northamptonshire. These changes will help ensure that the Council is better able to respond to changing demand for school place provision and make effective spending decisions to support the delivery of education provision to deliver services to children and families in North Northamptonshire
- 1.2. To update the Executive Advisory Panel on the benefits of the capital programme and seek approval of the approaches being developed to provide a robust underpinning of school place planning and school capital planning.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 NNC has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places for all children 4 –16 years old who want one. Within this role the Council has to work as a provider and a commissioner of school places, especially with a significant majority of schools within the Authority being Academies.
- 2.2. In the period between 2018 and mid-2024, whilst there were officers involved with delivering the Education capital programme there had not been substantive officers in post with the expertise to deliver robust, effect, school place planning across North Northamptonshire. As a consequence, the authority was unsuccessful in securing the levels of DfE Basic Need grants that might otherwise have been secured, and the confidence from the sector in North Northamptonshire about the ability to deliver appropriate strategic planning has wavered.
- 1.1. Since mid-2024 there has been a shift in focus as officers with greater experience around school place planning have been in post. As part of recent work reviewing the demand for school places, officers have identified significant pressures for secondary school places in Wellingborough as well as smaller pressures in Kettering and Corby. Pressures for Key Stage 2 places in Kettering have also been identified.
- 1.2. Acting as a commissioner of places requires the Council to work closely with schools to identify where suitable opportunities for expansion of provision exist. Consideration is given to ensuring that school expansions do not undermine the ability of schools to deliver high quality education and, reflecting wider partnership working will not adversely impact surrounding schools' ability to do the same – especially in cases where schools are on their own improvement journey.
- 1.3. This report does not seek approval for the capital expenditure required to respond to these pressures. This will be done through the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan process to be considered by Executive in February and Council at its meeting in March. It does, however, provide an update on

the review work undertaken and the revised place planning processes being implemented to underpin the strategic capital review processes.

- 1.4. The capital funding will be underpinned by individual funding agreements with the respective Multi-Academy Trusts, to enable Trusts to deliver the additional capacity required. Identified projects will be bench-marked against national funding costs to ensure that the schemes represent value for money, and to ensure that agreed budgets are maintained without the scope for significant cost creep.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive Advisory Panel:

- a) Note the processes being adopted to identify and respond to school place pressures within the Authority. Future reports to the EAP will provide further details and seek approvals of processes and strategies as these are further developed and completed.

3.2 Reasons for Recommendations:

- The Council’s role as a commissioner of school places, and the potentially significant capital costs of securing additional school places requires that the review and commissioning processes are as transparent and robust as possible. This will ensure that Members can have confidence in future recommendations provided for commissioning school places and that any capital expenditure is both necessary and represents good value for money.
- To ensure that the Council can fulfil its statutory duties in regards of providing sufficient school places within North Northamptonshire.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- No alternatives have been considered because:
 - The Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places for all school-aged pupils who want one. In recent years the Council has not had a robust and transparent process for securing these places. This is not a sustainable position moving forward and new approaches need to be developed to ensure the confidence of Councillors and the sector in decisions made around approach adopted to school place planning.

4. Issues and Choices

- 4.1 The Council has identified the need to secure additional secondary school places in three town within the authority, Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby. An additional need for limited expansion of Key Stage 2 provision in Kettering has also been identified.
- 4.2 Officers have undertaken detailed engagement with the schools in these areas to further understand the levels of additional capacity required and to explore where opportunities for increasing might exist. This has involved seeking clarification of where capital investment might be required, the justification for that investment and the scale of investment required. These are summarised in the tables below:

Table 1: Proposed solutions for Primary School Pupils

School	Proposed Provision	Number of places
<i>Kettering planning area:</i>		
Millbrook Infant School	An additional Year 2 class from January 2025	30
Millbrook Junior School	Additional classes in Key Stage 2 (Years 3,4,5 and 6) from September 2025	120

Table 2: Proposed solutions for Secondary School Pupils

School	Proposed Provision	Number of places
Corby planning area:		
Weldon Village College	An additional Year 10 (Bulge class) from September 2025 An additional Year 7 class from September 2026	30 150 (Permanent Expansion)
Lodge Park Academy	Additional Year 8 and 9 classes from Easter 2025	60
Kettering planning area:		
Kettering Science Academy	Additional 10 places per cohort from Easter 2025 An additional Year 10 (Bulge class) from September 2025	50 30
Latimer Arts College	An additional 35 places in Year 7 and 4 places in Year 8 from September 2025 10 additional places in Year 9 cohort from September 2025	49
Southfields Girls	An additional 10 places in Year 7 cohort from Easter 2025 An additional 22 places in Years 8 & 9 from Easter 2025	10 44
Wellingborough planning area:		
Sir Christopher Hatton	An additional Year 7 class from September 2026	150 (Permanent Expansion)
Wrenn Academy	An additional (Bulge class) in Year 7 from September 2025 A permanent expansion in PAN in Year 7 by 40 places from September 2026	30 200 (Permanent Expansion)

4.3 Officers have been working with all schools to understand the potential wider implications of allowing expansion in provision to be delivered. In each towns some schools are undertaking an improvement journey and officers are mindful that decisions taken by the Authority should not undermine the good work being taken by those schools.

5. Next Steps

5.1 The high-level capital schemes identified were considered by the Strategic Capital Board on 16th December. These proposals will be included within the MTFP considered by the Executive and Council as part of their future consideration of the budget.

Having identified mitigations to the immediate pressure's officers are working to develop the school place planning processes to improve the early identification and planning of school places in NNC will be implemented over the coming months. This will include the development of a School Organisation Strategy which will be developed in conjunction with academy trusts and other stakeholders, and which will be presented to the Executive for endorsement.

Other elements which will be developed include refinement of the Council's methodology for responding to the annual DfE Surplus Places and Capacity (SCAP) data return, further developing the strategic planning pipeline for capital projects to better link with the Council's MTFP processes