

Statement of Need:

Planning permission for a Double mobile classroom at Rowan Gate Primary School, Finedon Road, Wellingborough NN8 4NS

Background

Rowan Gate is the only special school in Wellingborough and East Northants for children aged 3 – 11 with significant learning and physical disabilities. There is growing pressure for additional pupil places and, after statutory consultation processes and public notices, the County Council's Cabinet approved in November 2013 the proposal to expand the school. This is being done by establishing a 56 place Annex to the school for pupils living closer to Rushden and East Northants; this will be housed on Hayway, Rushden at the premises of the former Hayway Infant School, which are being adapted and refurbished. The new facilities were scheduled to open in September 2014, but have been delayed due to planning matters that required specialist ecological mitigation (bat surveys).

This planning application therefore is for a temporary mobile classroom to be provided at the Rowan Gate site in Wellingborough to ensure there is sufficient and suitable accommodation for the interim bulge in pupil numbers prior to opening the new Annex in Rushden during 2015.

Pupil Numbers

The school was due to take an additional 15 pupils on to its roll from September 2014. As the new facility in Rushden has been delayed, the pupils are all being 'held' in their host primary schools for the autumn term prior to transferring to special school to meet their needs. In the 2013-14 academic year, Rowan Gate was already over capacity with 119 pupils in a building that was designed for 90. Since opening in 1975, there have been many changes, both in terms of building adaptations but also the requirements of the children; their needs are often complex and some children are attending with increasingly bulky and complex equipment.

There is no scope to accommodate an extra 15 pupils within the existing facilities at the Wellingborough site and it is not appropriate for these children to remain a further term at their original primary schools. The mobile classroom is therefore needed at the Wellingborough site to provide a stop-gap measure until the Hayway building works in Rushden are complete. The contractor was able to finally start on site on 1st September 2014 and the works are scheduled for completion in February 2015. The staff and pupils who are re-locating to the Rushden Annex are expected to do so from Easter 2015.

Planning permission is being sought for the mobile classroom to be on the Rowan Gate site in Wellingborough until the end of October 2015. This will allow the school to operate a phased moving-in and also provide some flexibility whilst they undertake repairs and decoration at Rowan Gate.

