Fairfields School Extension
Trinity Avenue, Northampton, NN2 6JN

Planning Support Statement
June 2016 – Rev A
Introduction

Fairfields is a 112 place primary special school taking children between the ages of 3 and 11 with severe or profound learning difficulties, autism, communication and physical difficulties. Fairfields also have classes for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Some children may also have multi-sensory impairment and complex medical difficulties.

Specialist facilities at Fairfields include a large soft play room, a multi-sensory room, a music therapy room, physiotherapy room and a speech therapist room. Fairfields also have a library and dedicated movement, PE and ICT facilities, and a large hydrotherapy pool. Outside areas include spacious lawns, class play areas, a music garden and a covered play area for Foundation Stage pupils.

Site Location

The purpose of this statement is to outline the local and national planning policy context for the planning application site. The site is located on Trinity Avenue, in a large well maintained ground close to the centre of Northampton, and lies within the administrative area of Northamptonshire Borough Council.
The key documents reviewed for this project include:

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1), adopted December 2014
National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012

Reference/guidance has also been drawn from the following documents to inform the design proposals (although not specifically referenced within this supporting statement):

Northamptonshire strategic plan for schools 2010 – 2021
Building Bulletin 87: Guidelines for Environmental Design in Schools
Building Bulletin 93: Acoustic Design of Schools
Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects
Building Bulletin 100: Design for fire safety in schools
Building Bulletin 101: Ventilation of School buildings
Building Bulletin 103: Area guidelines for mainstream schools
The Building Regulations Approved Documents (latest editions)
BS 8300: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of practice.

We have reviewed the above documents and highlighted the relevant policies/sections (using their references) which have informed the design basis for this project and added an explanation and commentary advising the specific reference to this project.

We have included a ‘Statement of Planning Need’ prepared by Northamptonshire County Council’s Strategic Planning department, within the Children, Families and Education Directorate to underpin the justification for the proposed school development. This is provided at the beginning of this Planning Support document, to explain the reasons and educational criteria which have generated the inception and scoping requirements for the project.
Statement of Need  
(prepared by Northamptonshire County Council)

Northamptonshire County Council aims to ensure that pupils with a statement of special educational needs or Education, Health & Care Plan (EHC) attend appropriate and good quality local education provision wherever possible. The Council recognises that the pupil population growth requires an increase in the provision and range of high quality options available for families and minimise the need for unnecessary travel from home. A recent review of Statement of Special Education Needs (SEND) provision identified gaps in Northamptonshire’s provision. NCC is therefore actively developing opportunities to create enhanced provision within mainstream primary and secondary schools, as well as utilising the expertise in special schools to create additional specialist provision in appropriate locations.

The extension of Fairfields School will positively contribute to the reduction in the number of pupils with specialist education needs whose needs are met in independent specialist provision by increasing the proportion of pupils whose additional needs are met in County.

The pupil numbers in special schools in the county have increased at both primary and secondary level since 2010. Growth has been at a faster rate than mainstream schools, increasing by 33% for primary and 22% for secondary.

Fairfields is a primary school taking children between the ages of three and eleven with severe or profound learning difficulties, communication and physical difficulties. The school is located in Northampton close to the race course on the outskirts of Kingsthorpe. The school also caters for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Some children may also have multi-sensory impairment and complex medical difficulties. The school is situated in large well maintained grounds close to the centre of Northampton. Its catchment area covers Northampton and the South and West of the County. This scheme will provide much needed SEND places in line with the growth in demand.

The school currently has capacity for up to one hundred and twelve (112) places. General accessibility around the school is a challenge as the school has grown beyond the original capacity of the buildings. Each class has typically eight pupils. This proposal considers increasing the capacity of the school to around one hundred and twenty (120). The scheme recognises there are severe issues with the condition of many, if not all of the internal toilet facilities throughout the school. There is no provision in the existing school for an adult disabled W.C. and the sensory room presents the
school with challenges due to its size, configuration and location within the school. There are significant storage problems for mobility equipment. The school currently use the corridors and circulation spaces for storage and this is far from ideal. This scheme extends the school to accommodate 120 pupils and brings up to standard the internal amenities in order to meet the increasing demand for special places in the County.

The scheme will consist of:
- Full refurbishment of the washroom area
- Incorporation of a new hygiene room
- New adult disabled W.C.
- Complete refurbishment of eleven toilet blocks and hygiene rooms throughout the school, (including H - hoists)
- Creation of new storage space to alleviate equipment storage issues and the consequent access problems
- The construction of a 210 m² extension block at the front of the school. The extension block will include a classroom, a group room, toilet facilities and circulation space
- The scheme includes for the re-modelling of the reception space and entrance to the school
- Including the formation of a secure lobby
- Improved office and administration space
- External resurfacing of 469 m² play area and landscaping of surrounds

Proposal

The proposed building is single storey and the proposal consists of three small extensions (a gross additional floor area of 303 m² at ground floor level) and several internal alterations in order to make the facility fit for purpose. The extensions will be single storey to match the existing. Individual teaching, curriculum, activity and ancillary spaces in the new teaching block are sized in accordance with guidance in BB103. A new play area will also be created on the South-East side.
Extensions

- The smaller extension is to become a corridor and a new equipment storage area (36 m²).
- A further extension will provide accommodation for the new lobby and office (57 m²). Two existing offices are to be converted to a single reception office in a location directly accessible from the main school entrance. Removing the external walls of the existing building the office will be extended by approximately 30 m². The small lobby extension is designed to provide a secure holding point for visitors under the control of the secretarial staff.
- The main extension (210 m²) is a new disabled accessible teaching block. It have a mono-pitch roof. This is to be connected to the existing building with a link corridor serving the group room, toilet, hygiene room and the classroom which includes a wet area and a store.
Planning Support Statement
Fairfields School Extension

Alterations to Existing Accommodation

- Toilets Blocks are to be altered to accommodate Disabled Accessible Toilets, Hygiene Rooms and a Staff Toilet Block. All toilet accommodation will have artificial lighting operated by occupancy sensors and an extract fan system with integral timer controls.
- Creation of a Laundry Room of 14 m² equipped with washing and drying machines.
- Relocation of two offices into new extension. Fit out of these two rooms for use as Family Room (9 m²) and a new Office (13 m²).
- Classroom to have existing headboards and redundant medical gas lines removed and walls made good and redecorated.
- Fit out existing room, approx 52 m², as new larger Sensory Room.
- Existing room to be refurbished to become new Classroom, approx. 48 m².
- Internal alterations to existing three smaller spaces to create a single Store Area, approx. 43 m².

External works

External works and landscape include:

- General improvements.
- Perimeter treatment- Additional fencing and the existing fencing will be adjusted to pass around the rear of the site to ensure there are no child protection issues.
- Resurface an existing play and terrace garden area as wheelchair friendly playground area of 469 m². Gabion baskets retaining wall structure is proposed along the South – East boundary. The enlarged play area is to be resurfaced.
Planning Support Statement
Fairfields School Extension

Materials
Where appropriate the elemental design and palette of materials reflect the design vocabulary of the existing school building to provide a coherence of appearance.

- Fair faced red brickwork at GF level with contrasting brick plinth and window heads and cills
- Aluminium windows and external doors, polyester powder coated, mid/dark grey colour
- Grey single ply membrane with false standing seams to shallow pitch roof
- Powder coated aluminium fascias and rain water goods, mid/dark grey colour

Access
The site levels are generally user friendly with dropped kerbs to all external pavement areas. Parking areas are located reasonably close to the main pedestrian entrance areas with tactile paving to all ramps and entrances.

Accessible parking facilities are provided in the visitors’ car park area.

All signage, floor finishes and general alarm systems will be provided with audio and visual warnings to current DDA guidelines. The means of escape will generally comply with the revised Building Regulations Part B Volume 2: 2006.

The Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA) requires all service providers, building owners/managements and designers to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities or impairments and guarantee that services are available to them on an equal basis. The new facilities will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Code of Practice BS 8300 and the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations.

Entrance
The extension to the entrance will provide level access. The Reception counter will be set at a height suitable for disabled visitors and staff.

Doors
Generally all doors within the new building have a clear opening of at least 875mm and are located so that there is at least 300mm clear to the leading edge.

Door furniture, closers and vision panels on new doors will be of a style and type that meets the requirements of APD Part M and the recommendations of BS 8300.

Toilets
These will be designed will comply with the recommendations of BS 8300.
Finishes
The surfaces throughout the facility will be suitable for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people and junctions will be level and well defined.
Contrast in colour and tone will be achieved between floor and wall finishes and in addition doors and their frames will also contrast with the walls in which they are fitted.

Means of Escape
An evacuation strategy will be put in place with responsibility allocated to certain staff for the assisted evacuation of pupils or staff with disabilities.
Personal emergency egress plans (PEEPS) will be provided for any disabled pupils, staff or visitors who use the building. These will deal with how staff will react and how assistance will be provided in the event of an emergency situation.

Planning
Fairfields is within the administrative area of Northamptonshire Borough Council, and is subject to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Plan. As such this is a key document in planning terms for the proposed development.

Planning Justification:
Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the enclosed proposal should be judged against those relevant policies from the Northampton Local Plan (1997), the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) as well as the content of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2012) where applicable.
The Northampton Local Plan Map confirms that there are no designations relating to the element of the site where the proposed extension is to be located.
The school site does not sit within a conservation area.
West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Plan

Policy SA – Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The proposals accord with this policy to make Fairfields more sustainable in terms of its education provision by providing improved and reorganised facilities for this Special Needs School in line with the County Council’s Strategic Plan for Schools 2010-2021 to meet both changing educational needs and the particular requirements of the school. The improved facilities for both the school and for use within the wider community will serve to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

The proposal to improve Fairfields Primary School will support the local workforce by providing further employment opportunities which will in turn benefit the local economy.

Policy S7 Provision of Jobs

The expanded school will provide a total of approximately 2 full-time jobs, both securing the existing jobs for those already employed and allowing the opportunity for further employment (new teaching assistants).

Policy S10 Sustainable Development Principles

The proposed extensions fulfil these objectives by delivering a high quality design solution for the scheme.

Due to the constraints of the site the new extensions are single storey to match the existing. The existing administration offices are to be relocated to an enlarged reception office within a new extension. This will centralise admin facilities and improve staffing of reception. The extension also includes an enlarged secure entrance lobby which will better meet child security requirements.

The main extension will provide additional teaching accommodation and accessible hygiene and toilets facilities. A number of existing classrooms and toilets are to be refurbished to provide improved facilities.

The construction will provide an envelope which will exceed the minimum statutory requirements for thermal insulation and will utilise energy efficient heating, lighting, ventilation and control systems.

Heating for the extensions will be fed by the existing central heating system and plant. Hot water will be supplied via local point of use boilers.

The building will incorporate water saving measures such as dual flush toilets and non-concussive taps.
During the construction stage the contract will include restrictions which will prohibit site deliveries / removals during the periods around the start and close of the school day.

Policy BN2 – Biodiversity
The enlarged play area will remove some existing raised planting beds. There are no mature trees or hedgerows that will be affected by these extensions and alterations work.

Policy BN7A – Water supply, Quality and Wastewater Infrastructure.
Adequate and appropriate water and drainage will be provided for the new extension.

Policy BN7 – Flood Risk
The site is some distance from the nearest water course and the flood risk map on the Environment Agency’s interactive website shows that there is no risk of flooding.

The NPPF sets out those roles which the planning system is required to perform in order to ensure the delivery of sustainable development. The application will enable the improvement and continued supply of the education offer in Northamptonshire and will ensure that the school is able to offer an attractive local option to parents who are considering the educational needs of their children without the need to travel excessive distances. The proposal is clearly in line with the Core Planning Principles set out at Para 17 of the Framework.

The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing communities. In addition, Para 72 of the framework encourages local planning authorities to take a pro-active, positive and collaborative approach to widening the choice of education. Para 72 also requires LPA’s to afford great weight to the need to expand, create or alter schools, the application is therefore in conformity with the Governments planning and education objectives.

The proposal will improve the education offered by Fairfields. Fairfields Specialist Primary School is a key piece of local infrastructure which needs to remain an attractive place for parents to send their children in their formative years. It is clear that improving the existing teaching and amenity (sanitary) facilities and external amenity areas will help to ensure that the school responds to current standards and meets the expectations of parents, pupils and staff. It is therefore considered that the
Planning Support Statement
Fairfields School Extension

application, which conforms to both national and local planning policy, should be seen favourably and approved without delay in line with the presumption as set out at Para 14 of the Framework.

Pre-Application Consultations and Community Involvement

A number of bodies will be consulted in developing the design proposals.

NCC Planning
Informal advice will be sought by the County Council’s project manager regarding public consultation and any other matters that need to be taken into consideration prior to the Planning Application.

Public Consultation
A Pre-Planning Consultation was held at Fairfields School on 19th May 2016. Invitations were issued to school parents, pupils, local residents and parish councilors. Questionnaire and feedback forms were available to allow comments and possible concerns to be expressed. Representatives from Northamptonshire County Council, the School and DarntonB3 Architecture were present to respond to queries raised and provide accurate information and clarification.

No-one objected to the principle of increasing the capacity of the school with some statements showing support for the extension.

During the Public Consultation there weren’t adverse comments from residents in relation to traffic. The additional eight pupils are most likely to travel to school by minibus and the additional car journeys are likely to be limited to the vehicles associated with the two additional members of staff. The existing car park is sufficient to accommodate the increase.