

NEW SCHOOLS FOR A NEW CENTURY

Proposals which will transform secondary education and special school provision in Nottingham are the subject of a major citywide consultation exercise starting today.

Everyone in the city, whether they have children at school or not, is being asked for their views on the proposals which have been put forward as part of Building Schools for the Future, a national initiative which aims to update secondary schools across the country.

Nottingham is to receive enough money to rebuild or refurbish some of the most dilapidated secondary and special school buildings in the city. Some of the city's secondary schools are more than 40 years old and were designed to meet the needs of the 20th century. All of them need to be brought up to the standard required in the 21st century.

The headline proposals

1. Build a brand new special school for pupils with severe physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties, replacing Aspley Wood and Shepherd special schools.
2. Create three new city academies in Bulwell, Mapperley and Bilborough.
3. Either build a new Haywood Comprehensive in Sherwood or close Haywood and consider either partly or totally rebuilding Big Wood (which would leave enough money to build another new school).
4. Close Fairham Community College, expanding Farnborough School & Technology College.
5. Implement the plan to reorganise special schools in the city.
6. Complete the refurbishment of Hadden Park High School.
7. Close Manning School.
8. If a new Haywood Comprehensive is built, then refurbish the Nottingham Bluecoat School & Technology College. If not, then a possible option would be to rebuild Bluecoat in Wollaton next to Bluecoat in Aspley.
9. Complete the rebuilding of Ellis Guilford Comprehensive & Sports College

The detail

1. The brand new special school proposed would cater for pupils with severe physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties, replacing Aspley Wood and Shepherd special schools. The plan is to build it alongside Hadden Park High and Glenbrook Primary in Bilborough. A new children's centre for young children and their families and a vocational training centre are also planned.

2. The three new city academies proposed would be built on the sites of William Sharp Comprehensive in Bilborough; Elliott Durham Comprehensive in Mapperley and River Leen Comprehensive in Bulwell.

Nottingham already has one city academy – Djanogly in Forest Fields. City academies are a new type of school. Although they cater for the same ability range as other schools, they are set up with the support of a private sponsor – usually a local business, sometimes a voluntary organisation or religious group – in partnership with central government and local education partners.

3. Should Haywood close so that resources can be concentrated on expanding and modernising Big Wood? Or should a new site be found to build a bigger 'New Haywood'? Pupil numbers have fallen at Haywood, but the school has come out of Special Measures and its exam results have improved. The City Council is keen to find a site somewhere in Sherwood which would help Haywood to attract more students. The current site is unsuitable for expansion.

Alternatively, an option is to close Haywood and consider expanding and partially or totally rebuilding Big Wood. Big Wood has just had a very good Ofsted report, improved its GCSE results and won 'Business and Enterprise' specialist status. Then, Haywood could either be completely rebuilt in Sherwood, or closed to expand and partly or totally rebuild Big Wood.

4. Farnborough and Fairham are near-neighbours. Although pupil numbers are dropping in Clifton, as elsewhere, Farnborough is so popular that there's even a waiting list for places. On the other hand,



numbers are falling at Fairham and the forecast is for fewer than 300 pupils on the school roll by September 2008. The proposal is to create a 1,000-place comprehensive for Clifton on a single site – close to South Nottingham College's new vocational training centre.

5. Plans to reorganise the city's special schools have been on the table for some time. Nottingham currently has two schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. But fewer pupils now attend both Nethergate (Clifton) and Woodlands (Bilborough). The proposal is to close both of them and create a 'centre of excellence' for pupils with complex difficulties in the refurbished premises of the present Woodlands Special School. (Pupils with severe physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties would attend the new centre of excellence replacing Aspley Wood and Shepherd.)

Rosehill (which specialises in educating autistic pupils) would move from its present very inconvenient inner-city site to the Nethergate site in Clifton, close to Farnborough and the new vocational centre based at South Nottingham College's Charnwood site.

6. The refurbishment of Hadden Park High, a 'Fresh Start' school, would be completed as part of the proposals, creating a children's centre and a vocational centre for 14 to 19-year-olds.

7. Pupil numbers at Manning Comprehensive are falling (likely to fall to 450 by September 2008) and the number of good GCSE passes is below the Government's threshold. If the school could manage to attract at least another 300 girls by September 2008, this could justify keeping it open. But that would skew the ratio of girls to boys in other secondary schools.

8. If a new Haywood is built, there wouldn't be enough money to move and rebuild the Nottingham Bluecoat School & Technology College's Wollaton premises. Instead, the present buildings would be expanded and refurbished. But if it was decided to close Haywood instead, one possible option would be to rebuild Bluecoat (Wollaton) next door to the original Bluecoat in Aspley.

9. The rebuilding of Ellis Guilford Comprehensive & Sports College would be completed as part of the proposals. The school is popular, successful and the city's only specialist sports college to date. Half of the school has just been rebuilt and a new sports hall is under construction. The rest is in very poor condition.

More money for further schemes is expected in future. These may include the rebuilding of Greenwood Dale Technology College; modernising Top Valley; completing the refurbishment of Fernwood; carrying out works at Trinjty, and refurbishing or completing works at Big Wood; the city's pupil referral units and Bluecoat's Aspley site.

Edwina Grant, Nottingham City Council's Director of Education and Children's Strategy, said: "In November 2004 we were given the news that we would benefit from millions of pounds to help transform Nottingham's secondary education provision (including special education) as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme.

"'Building Schools for the Future – Nottingham' will mean better schools to learn in, teach in and work in. To achieve this, there may need to be some changes. The birthrate is falling quite dramatically and parental choice also has an impact on planning for the future. To ensure we have thriving schools that are popular with parents as well as pupils, it seems likely that a small number of schools may need to close.

"The earliest a new school could open would be September 2009 – which gives us time to plan properly.

"Over the last few weeks, we have discussed our initial ideas with headteachers and school governors to get their views. Now a wider consultation process is beginning to get the views of parents and local communities about the proposals."

The consultation is open to everyone in the city, not just parents of children at the schools involved. Comments can be made via a response form on the back page of the 'Building Schools for the Future' consultation document which is being sent to all parents. It can also be obtained by ringing the BSF hotline on 0115 915 0652 or online at www.nottinghamschools.co.uk/bsf

Completed forms should be returned to the BSF Administrator, Education Department, Nottingham City Council, Sandfield Centre, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 1QH or by email mavis.bartley@lea.nottinghamcity.gov.uk The document is also available in other languages, in large print, in Braille or on tape.

Public meetings at secondary schools across the city are also taking place as part of the seven-week consultation which ends on June 10.

