

NEW ERA FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents and carers of children with severe disabilities and learning difficulties are being invited to explore plans for a state-of-the-art centre of excellence which the City Council wants to build in Bilborough.

The proposals are part of a wide-ranging review of special education across Nottingham first announced almost two years ago.

A series of meetings for everyone with an interest in the proposed new school – parents, carers, staff, governors and members of the public – has been set up during a month-long consultation period from today, Monday 09 January.

If the plans are approved, the new £9.5m special school will replace Aspley Wood and Shepherd special schools as part of Nottingham's ambitious Building Schools for the Future programme. Building would start on the Hadden Park campus in Bilborough in the spring of 2008 and the first pupils should start their education at the new school in September 2009.

The plans envisage a 140-place school as part of a 'learning village' on the site, including Hadden Park High School, Glenbrook Primary and a new children's centre for under-fives.

Consultation documents being sent out to interested parties emphasise that education for the children who currently attend Aspley Wood and Shepherd won't be disrupted - since the two existing schools will not be demolished until the new centre of excellence is completed. "These plans for a completely new state-of-the-art school demonstrate our commitment to providing the very best education for pupils who deserve the very best," says Council Graham Chapman, City Council education spokesman. "Choice is the watchword: developing a variety of provision is the key to our approach, so that parents have a range of options to consider. The new learning village with this special school at its heart will offer pupils a wide range of experiences and opportunities tailored to their individual needs.

"The Building Schools for the Future initiative enables us to replace old and outworn buildings with a fantastic new school equipped with the very latest technology."

Staff and governors are already meeting to plan the new development and they are promising to involve children and their families at every stage. The four-week consultation includes two meetings for parents, carers, and members of the public (at Shepherd School on 17 January at 1.30 pm and at Aspley Wood on 19 January at the same time) and two for staff and governors two hours later on the same dates. People are also being invited to drop in to the schools from 8.50 am on the two days if they prefer to learn more about the plans and give their views in a less formal setting. Response forms are being sent out with details of the plans and calls are also being taken on the Council's BSF hotline – 0115 915 0652.

