

Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of school places for every child in Essex who requires one. Whilst there is no requirement to have special schools or specialist provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), the majority of local authorities do have special schools and specialist provisions.

The following pressures have driven the requirement for significant investment in new places in Essex, both through the development of new schools and through the expansion of existing schools:

- A consistently high number of pupils with SEND cannot have their needs met in Essex schools and are subsequently educated in independent schools at high cost to both the High Needs Block of the Essex Dedicated Schools Grant and ECC budgets.
- The number of children and young people in Essex special schools have grown consistently since the SEND reforms of 2015 and have placed severe pressure on capacity as a consequence.
- Mainstream schools in Essex do educate a higher percentage of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan but many pupils with higher needs are currently being kept in provision which is not appropriate to their needs.
- The requirement to place pupils and parents/carers at the heart of planning and provision for SEND.

Essex County Council want to know your views on our proposal to expand Shorefields SEND School through the provision of a new teaching block. The new single storey teaching accommodation will provide level entry access, two new class bases, each with a dedicated break-out room, toilets, new play equipment and 8 additional car parking spaces to accommodate an additional 9 students, as well as creating greater capacity for recent growth in numbers, for January 2026. The new block will provide fit -for-purpose teaching accommodation to improve capacity for children and young people from 3-19 years with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties in the locality.

I invite you to let me have your views on this proposal. All the views expressed will be taken into account by the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability when he decides whether to publish a statutory notice about the expansion.



Clare Kershaw
Director, Education

BACKGROUND

These proposals have been developed in partnership between Essex County Council and Shorefields School in order to support the need for additional places for children and young people with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties and to provide them with the facilities that will enable them to thrive. There is an increasing need for additional spaces in Tendring, especially with the increase in new housing. This has created a rising need for places at the school over the years, due to population growth and a rise in the number of children and young people who require a special school place, putting pressure on the school's infrastructure.

Growth in the number of children and young people with an EHCP in Tendring between 2018/19 and 2023/24 has been higher than that across the County as an average – from 900 EHCPs to 1,700 (88% growth). The forecast is that this will grow to 1,950 by 2028/29 (30% growth – also higher than the County average). The special school population in Tendring grew from 400 in 2018/19 to 650 in 2024/25 (62.5% growth) and is forecast to rise to 850 in 2028/29 (a further 31% growth).

Tendring is the only district with more of the EHCP population in a special school than in a mainstream school. Capacity at Shorefields, the only school for children with severe learning difficulties, is under pressure as a result of this growth. Without additional capacity more children with an EHCP in Tendring who need a special school place will need home to school transport to travel further distances to access education.

Shorefields is a special needs school for 159 pupils ages 3-19 with a range of complex, severe and profound learning needs. The school was rated as outstanding by Ofsted in its last inspection. The school's website can be found here: [Shorefields School - Home](#) .

How Can You Make Your Views Known?

ECC is seeking the views of all interested persons about the proposal to expand Shorefields. At this stage no decision has been made on the expansion proposal and all the views received will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

This consultation is about whether you think that an expansion at Shorefields is needed, given the predicted increase in the number of local children needing specialist provision.

If the expansion is approved additional accommodation will be needed at the school. To ensure that the local community understands the new building's potential implications, the County Council will undertake a pre-application exhibition at the school once design work on the new accommodation is sufficiently advanced. Parents and members of the local community will be given the opportunity to review the latest draft proposals and to provide feedback prior to submission to the County Planning Authority as a full planning application, should the expansion go ahead.

The proposed provision and decision process is outlined below.

You are invited to respond to this consultation using the following electronic survey form:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/school-organisation/shorefields>

You may also send feedback and comments to:

SEND Strategy and Innovation

senstrategy@essex.gov.uk

County Hall

Market Road

Chelmsford CM1 1QH

All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected and included in the analysis of feedback received.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the consultation process or the expansion proposal you email Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation at senstrategy@essex.gov.uk . Alternatively you may contact the chair of governors of the school, via the school office.

School Expansion Proposal

This consultation seeks views from stakeholders on a proposal to expand Shorefields by 9 places. The proposed block of two classrooms and the facilities for early years outdoor learning and play, would have a specific purpose of providing for the most complex young children who attend the school. If this proposal is agreed the additional capacity will be available from the spring term of 2026.

Admission

The admissions criteria for the school would not change as a result of the proposed expansion.

Transport Arrangements

Transport arrangements would remain in line with the home to school transport policies of Essex County Council. The school will review and update its existing Travel Plan and will work to encourage sustainable methods of travel to school such as walking, scooting and cycling.

Building Work

The intention is that construction works will be implemented to provide two new class bases, toilets, break out space and 8 new car parking spaces to accommodate an additional 9 students for completion in January 2026.

Site surveys, and detailed design work, are being undertaken which will lead to a proposed design for the additional accommodation. Once the design for the new accommodation is

sufficiently advanced, ECC propose to undertake a pre-application exhibition at the school. Parents and members of the local community will be given the opportunity to review the latest draft proposals and to provide feedback. ECC will consider all comments received prior to submitting a detailed planning application to the County Planning Authority. A summary of the pre-application consultation responses will also accompany the submitted planning application.

Funding

The project will be an addition to the County Council's Capital Programme and will include section 106 contrubtions. The Council publishes its capital programme at www.essex.gov.uk.

What happens next?

At the end of this consultation period the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability will consider all feedback and views expressed by interested parties during the consultation and will make a decision on whether to proceed with the school expansion proposal. The governing body of the school will also consider the feedback from this consultation and decide if it still wishes to support the proposal.

Timeline

The consultation period will run from 16th June 2025 to 14th July 2025. Below is the expected timeline for the decision process:

16 th June 2025	Consultation commences
9 th July 2025	Meetings for parents, staff and the local community to be held at the school at 4pm.
14 th July 2025	End of consultation period
August 2025	Decision by ECC on whether to publish a Statutory Notice
September 2025	Publication of Statutory Notice (if decision above is to proceed with the expansion process)
October 2025	End of four week period for representations
November 2025	Decision taken by Essex County Council on expansion proposal
* 1 January 2026	New ARP established at Shorefields School

* This stage will apply only if the proposal is approved by the County Council.

All written comments should be received by ECC by 14th July 2025. ECC handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act

1998. Your responses to this consultation will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposed amalgamation and not for any other purpose. We will not give information about you to anyone outside the County Council.

The information contained in this leaflet can be made available in alternative formats: large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. Please email senstrategy@essex.gov.uk

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