

Update re Charlton House  
19.08.24

The proposal is to re-purpose the now closed Charlton House into a new SEND School providing 12 residential places and an additional 18 day places for young people aged 11-17 with complex special educational needs in the area of autism with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

This project is directly linked with the Safety Valve work which includes the commitment from B&NES to increase the sufficiency of places for children and young people with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). The project will reduce the overspend in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and increase the local offer, preventing expensive out-of-county placements and allowing the pupils to be educated within their own community.

The average cost of an out-of-county day placement at an Independent Special school currently stands at £96k. The cost of residential SEND placements currently stands at £318k (average placement costs with a mix of 38 & 52wks). This project will result in estimated savings to the Council of £2,171,075 (education and transport) and £2,043,859 (residential) per annum, the latter directly benefitting the Children's Social Care budget.

A recent feasibility study estimates the costs at £6.1m (total costs including fees, contingency, separation works). We will, as part of the project going forward (if approved through PID and SMD), carry out an exercise to see if we can bring the costs down by value engineering and some more detailed design around minimising structural/M&E work.

The proposed new school would be opened under the Dept. of Education's 'Free School Presumptive Route', where a local authority identifies a need for a new school in its area. If approved through the PID and SMD process, the next step will be to publish the specification for the school and engage with prospective proposers (single or multi-academy trusts) who may wish to apply to establish the new free school.