

Appendix 3 - Responses to the consultation document

Response 1: - Why did the local authority not know about these works before?

Feedback to Response 1: - The County Council has worked with Welburn Hall School to manage maintenance issues, including in respect of the heating system. A recent leak to the heating pipework demonstrated the extent to which it is corroded and at risk of further leaks / failure. Unfortunately the heating system within the main hall (House) is complex with much of the infrastructure being contained in ducts that are not easily accessible. This means that if a leak were to occur in some areas then repairs would not be able to be completed easily and the School would be at risk of closure for, potentially, extended periods.

The recommendations that have been made, therefore, represent an appropriate solution to address the risk of unexpected disruption to teaching within the School.

Response 2: - I agree to the be work being done as long as boarding provision is resumed as soon as possible.

Feedback to response 2: - Thank you for your response. We have noted that you have expressed a strong desire to see the County Council resume boarding provision at Welburn Hall at the earliest opportunity.

Response 3: - I notice that you do not mention anything about the staff, many who will be losing their jobs, some of them having worked for years.

Feedback to response 3: - Thank you for your response. In developing these proposals and considering the overall implications for the school community, we have been very mindful of the implications for the residential care staff. We have discussed with the staff group that the school will commence a consultation process in February which will focus specifically upon the implications for that staff group - but this consultation is focused upon the specific implications for the offer to families.

Response 4: - The maintenance work is clearly a much needed requirement for housing complex needs students in the future and will ensure the smooth running of the facility, hopefully for the foreseeable future, however it will have a huge negative impact on not only the boarding students, but the more complex students currently at Welburn as three classrooms within the house will have to be relocated to less suitable classrooms for a period of two years. Would a partial closure be possible in order to keep some students in their current rooms and with the facilities needed? Students would obviously have to vacate their classrooms for a period of time whilst work is being carried out in there.

Feedback to Response 4: - Thank you for your response. In the first instance I would like to reassure you that the temporary classroom units that will be sourced are modern, and their design offer good sized spaces and excellent learning environments - which we are confident will be regarded as being at least as effective as the existing classroom spaces both within the House and across the site at Welburn Hall.

In relation to your question about partial access to the House building during the programme of works, we appreciate that there are a number of benefits to the school

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having such access, but at this stage we need a more detailed planned programme of works to evaluate what is feasible and when we have that detailed programme, we will discuss more fully with school leaders.

Response 5: - No

Feedback to response 5: - Thank you for your feedback, which will be factored into the report to the County Council Executive

Response 6: - The loss of the house over a two-year period will have a huge knock on affect to the day to day running of the school. The house is so much more than a dining room, kitchen, classroom and residential facility. All the rooms in the house are used as break out space, tv areas, games rooms, reception, meeting rooms, kitchenettes for living skills, specialist toileting facilities and a fabulous sensory room. Please take into account all these essential provisions when you close the house. The provision of four temporary classrooms just won't be enough even though it appears only being a loss of three current classrooms. Our wonderful students require areas away from the classroom to eat, spend safe break times, have quiet areas for sensory issues, the use of a sensory room, a games room for socialising and safe break area and a living skill learning area. Four temporary classrooms just won't be enough. Temporary classrooms need to have secure gated surroundings to ensure the students safety. Car parking also needs revising as half the school team park currently at the house. when the project is finished, I'm sure it will be a future asset, but we need to seriously think of the current students' needs over the next two years.

Feedback to Response 6: - Thank you for your comments and you have raised a number of important issues which we will attempt to address individually.

We do recognise the breadth of activity that currently takes place within the House and that whilst the temporary classrooms that we are arranging to place on site will provide excellent learning environments for pupils, we understand that this will not fully replicate the areas needed to support the activities you describe. We will continue to work with the school leadership to explore solutions to these challenges, including investigating whether there is scope to make some limited use of the House building.

We recognise your comments about the safety of pupils and would want to assure you that the local authority "temporary provision" arrangements are not just about installing temporary classroom units and will also include minor works to ensure that there is secure access to the school site and that reception arrangements can work on a streamlined basis with appropriate regard to pupil safeguarding.

Finally, we have registered the importance of having sufficient staff parking spaces, and our planning application does include provision to install temporary parking bays on the school site.

Response 7: - The proposal is very disappointing but I can't see any other way to do this. The safety of the staff and children is absolutely paramount.

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Feedback to response 7: - Thank you for your comments - which have been noted

Response 8: - The house currently provides various services to the school, not just residential provision. Space needs to be provided for a sensory room, meeting and therapy spaces, games room, storage space etc. Practical and emotional support needs to be provided for those staff being made redundant. The proposed use of the school hall for lunches needs to be replaced by a similar size space, as the hall is currently used over lunchtimes for clubs and social space; an alternative need to be provided. Are the grounds around the house and parking at the house going to continue to be available? If not, alternative parking needs to be provided for staff and visitors. Support needs to be given for families who may need to find alternative placements for their young people if Welburn Hall no longer meets need, due to removal of residential provision. The SLT team needs to be restructured to reflect the proposed removal of the residential manager role. This role is currently a pivotal one. A safeguarding/deputy head role would be highly desirable to support the education team.

Feedback to response 8: - Thank you for your comments and you have raised a number of important issues which we will attempt to address individually

We do recognise the breadth of activity that currently takes place within the House and that whilst the temporary classrooms that we are arranging to place on site will provide excellent learning environments for pupils, we understand that this will not fully replicate the areas needed to support the activities you describe. We will continue to work with the school leadership to explore solutions to these challenges.

At this stage it is not possible to provide a definitive answer on your question regarding the grounds. We are anticipating a detailed programme of works which will define the extent to which the House building and surrounding grounds need to be taken out of circulation and for what periods of time, and when we receive that programme, we will work closely with the school leadership to discuss the specific implications for the school operation and possible mitigations.

However, we have registered the importance of having sufficient staff parking spaces, and our planning application does include provision to install temporary parking bays on the school site.

We are very mindful of the issue of securing appropriate alternative placements that deliver effective support for young people who would otherwise have been in residential provision at Welburn Hall. We can confirm that there are only two young people on the current roll who would have continued their residential placement into the 23/24 academic year, and we are working intensively to identify high quality alternative arrangements.

We have noted your comments that's you consider it would be opportune to review the management structure at the school in the light of the developments set out in the consultation response. However, these issues are a matter for the School Governing Body to consider.

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Response 9: - I do object to the two closures of residential status of Welburn. This will have huge impact on the SEN children/students.

Feedback to Response 9: - Thank you for your response. We do recognise that the proposal will mean that residential provision at Welburn Hall is not available for a period of two years. As outlined in our proposal we will work intensively with families to ensure that all young people who would otherwise have had their needs through residential provision at Welburn Hall have appropriate provision put in place.

Response 10: - Welburn Hall has been a residential school for a long time. The result of it being residential to the pupils is the fact of their independence going forward. The skills pupils learn when in a residential environment cannot be taught in school time. They learn how to interact with each other in a relaxed environment, to laugh and play. Skills they can develop in the evenings. To lose the residential side of school is such a big loss to the community of special needs children. Please ensure that Welburn WILL reopen to residential as soon as possible.

Feedback to Response 10: - Thank you for your comments.

We have noted your comments about the impact that the residential offer can provide to young people, and we would want to emphasise that prior to the critical buildings condition report, we had recently consulted upon the revision to the residential offer at Welburn Hall (during 2021) and concluded that we wanted to retain that provision because of those benefits it can provide to young people.

Also, we would want to emphasise that the unique nature of the Welburn Hall environment is recognised by the local authority, alongside the scope it provides to offer a wide range of enrichment activities for pupils attending both on a day provision and residential basis, and that will be an important element of our assessment of the optimal long-term strategic future for the school.

Response 11: - The health and safety of the whole school community is paramount and so understand the need for the works to take place. My main concern that the existing facilities and temporary buildings will meet the needs of the students who attend. For example ramps and enough disabled changing facilities. Life skills is an important part of the curriculum will the temporary buildings be able to facilitate this?

Feedback to Response 11: - Thank you for your comments

We do recognise the breadth of activity that currently takes place within the House and that whilst the temporary classrooms that we are arranging to place on site will provide excellent learning environments for pupils, we understand that this will not fully replicate the areas needed to support the activities you describe. We will continue to work with the school leadership to explore solutions to these challenges.

Specifically in terms of access for students with disabilities, this will be a fundamental consideration for us and the school in terms of any facilities we provide.

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Response 12: - There is a huge house which could benefit so many special needs students. The main restraints felt by all special schools is space so in order to offer families more options for residential and wrap round care, this provision is absolutely crucial. There just isn't anywhere with the space, staff and provision that this house could offer anywhere else in the area [and many other areas].

Feedback to Response 12: - Thank you for your comments. The unique nature of the Welburn Hall environment is recognised by the local authority, alongside the scope it provides to offer a wide range of enrichment activities for pupils attending both on a day provision and residential basis. There is potentially a trade-off that with the unique environment that a historic house building can offer, there comes the potential liabilities of expensive running costs and repairs implications. However, the benefits that you have discussed will be factored into the local authority evaluation of the strategic options.

Response 13: - I can understand the difficulties of trying to maintain a listed building with massive grounds and ancient heating systems. The environment at Welburn looks a very calm setting which looks well positioned to service vulnerable young people from central and eastern sector of an enormous county council. I can't believe that the Council or School managers would be able to meet the council's budget for heating, lighting and maintenance let alone working towards environmental targets even after the building's heating system is replaced. I would have thought that the amalgamation of the district councils into a unitary council would have released property from the estate that would be more cost effective to convert to residential standards without the restrictions of listed building status. If these young people have a need to be educated and cared for in a residential setting then I am anticipating that these N Yorks young people will have to be provided for outside the county and that this may have long term higher costs, and impact some families that are already under pressure. I have read the report of the education and care provision at Welburn Hall and am impressed that it has gained accreditation from the Autism Society and has a skilled and dedicated team of staff that are getting results and are judged as good and improving. The costs of making these valuable staff redundant is dead money and when the pause of residential provision has ended, and a building is in place the staff won't be. I am not sure what the council can do with such a building and grounds in the longer term as I know the likes of North Yorkshire Police have sold off their HQ as it didn't fit in to their modern-day estate. I am also aware a number of North Yorkshire buildings in Northallerton remain closed up. I do know that the special needs of young people are important and a statutory duty.

Feedback to Response 13: - Thank you for your comments

The issues you have flagged about the potential future performance of the buildings following any works programme, and the need to evaluate alternative buildings have been noted and will form an integral part of our evaluation of future long-term strategic options.

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In addition, your comments regarding the skills and expertise of the current care staff cohort and how they contribute to the excellent outcomes at the school have been noted and will be a very important consideration for the local authority.

Response 14: - I think this is a good idea and should go ahead

Feedback to Response 14: - Thank you for your comments which have been noted and will be included in the report to the Executive at the end of the consultation process

Response 15: - As well as the 3 formal classrooms, the house is also used for other educational purposes during the school day. The Internet Café and kitchen is regularly used as a teaching space and at lunchtimes. The Games Room and entrance area are used at breaks, particularly in winter and wet weather - and also as calming/recreation/meeting areas. The laundry room is used for storage of work clothes, boots and spare uniform. Extra provision should be made for these functions. The house and dining hall also provide a valuable welcoming and psychological space for the students which needs to be accounted for in temporary provision. To avoid or reduce compulsory redundancy, NYCC could offer voluntary redundancy terms to include education staff, creating vacancies to allow redeployment for care staff to education roles (teaching assistants) on similar pay levels, which require similar skills and qualifications. A number of staff have successfully switched from care to education jobs.

Feedback to Response 15: - Thank you for your comments.

We do recognise the breadth of activity that currently takes place within the House and that whilst the temporary classrooms that we are arranging to place on site will provide excellent learning environments for pupils, we understand that this will not fully replicate the areas needed to support the activities you describe. We will continue to work with the school leadership to explore solutions to these challenges. The Local Authority and the Governing Bdy of the School are committed to exploring all redeployment opportunities and minimising compulsory redundancy as far as possible.

Response 16: - I do hope this temporary removal of the boarding facility will only be temporary and not a cynical exercise to take the boarding away forever

Feedback to Response 16: - Thank you for your comments.

We have noted your comments about the impact that the residential offer can provide to young people, and we would want to emphasise that prior to the critical buildings condition report, we had recently consulted upon the revision to the residential offer at Welburn Hall (during 2021) and concluded that we wanted to retain that provision because of those benefits it can provide to young people. Also, we would want to emphasise that the unique nature of the Welburn Hall environment is recognised by the local authority, alongside the scope it provides to offer a wide range of enrichment activities for pupils attending both on a day provision and residential basis, and that will be an important element of our assessment of the optimal long-term strategic future for the school.

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Response 17: - We have concerns over the due diligence on the part of the LA. Nearly £300k of work was carried out and great hope amongst staff of a new start, buying into the new plan. We assumed there'd be new job opportunities over the weekend. Felt that the future of the school was assured. Within the current economic climate and the general lack of funding for SEND, are the LA in a financial position to be able to carry out these works or is this not in danger of becoming an issue of school having to close on this site or operate with substandard buildings for a number of years. We have been told that the temporary classrooms will be in place but for our children, we struggle to see how these buildings will be an adequate replacement for what the House provides. We would strongly urge the LA to allow the HT to keep the House open as long as possible until it's a building site. We are very concerned about parking and logistics for Sept 23. The House contains many heavy and large resources, and we are not privy to what the plans might be for these to be stored/used? We have concerns that if the information about the House heating system wasn't known to County, can we be sure that the condition of the school systems are any better? And if not, would that condemn the whole site? What is the contingency plan? We have very serious concerns about the students going into the mobiles, not having break out spaces such as exist indoors in the House. We are concerned about feeding over 100+ students in the Assembly Hall. We will definitely need significant storage spaces and we are concerned that County may overlook the fact that our students can't just use mainstream tables or facilities. We are a very popular school in a unique geographic location in the middle of NYCC and strongly urge that County consider the success of the school including the AP which has 100% customer satisfaction and the excellent Ofsted reports detailing the quality of education. we would hate to see such a unique setting closed or left to ruin due to finances, when it could be invested in and made a centre for SEND for whole county.

Feedback to Response 17: - Thank you for your feedback and we will respond to all of the issues you have raised.

Firstly, we understand that the school has invested resources in developing facilities in the Main House in recent years. Unfortunately, the concerns over the heating system only became apparent in Summer 2022 because a recent leak to the heating pipework demonstrated the extent to which it is corroded and at risk of further leaks / failure. The heating system within the main hall is complex with much of the infrastructure being contained in ducts that are not easily accessible. This means that if a leak were to occur in some areas, then repairs would not be able to be completed easily and the School would be at risk of closure for, potentially, extended periods.

The local authority had had recently consulted upon the revision to the residential offer at Welburn Hall (during 2021) and concluded that we wanted to retain that provision (albeit with a revision to the designated offer) because of those benefits it can provide to young people. That plan would have remained in place, were it not for the significant work required to the House building which has necessitated these proposals.

The work programme being constructed is intended to address the identified difficulties with both the heating and drainage at the school. There is no evidence

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that the heating problems associated with the House all apply to the main school buildings.

In terms of the challenges regarding the longer-term sustainability of the school, the local authority is committed to maintaining Welburn Hall school as an integral part of its specialist provision offer in the County (reflecting your comments about the strength of the school in supporting increased numbers of pupils and delivering high quality outcomes for pupils). However, the evaluation of longer-term strategic options will be required to determine the optimal future location for the school and the breadth of the offer we can put in place.

We are mindful of both the breadth of activity currently taking place in the House and the resources that need to be relocated from the school and are evaluating the extent to which this activity can be replicated in the interim period – which will also be dependent upon the technical advice received about the extent to which the House will need to be out of action during the works programme.

The interim arrangements will include specific arrangements to mitigate the impact of the temporary classroom facilities reducing the availability of car parking spaces.

Response 18: - My child has been at Welburn Hall since being in Primary age group, and is now moving into 6th Form. Throughout this time, there has been a gradual removal of a boarding offer, along with a shorter school day. My child and many other students have no other social contacts beyond school, they are unable to access Scouts, youth clubs, sports clubs and other social clubs in their own communities. The short school day is everything to them. The removal of the boarding sounds inevitable and perhaps unavoidable, so perhaps you need to consider putting compensatory experiences in place. This should be done in further consultation with the families involved, and could include some extended days within school, to learn to enjoy casual social activities, or regular overnight stays, perhaps at Peat Rigg or Youth Hostels around our region. I'm sure other people will be able to come up with many more suggestions of how the loss of the residential opportunity can be compensated for. I am generally supportive of Welburn Hall being the place to offer boarding for the students that are currently boarding out of County at a vast expense. However, some of the savings made, should be allocated to providing continued casual boarding experiences for the students who would have been the boarders in previous years. I have not been able to attend the virtual meetings, as the invitation arrived after the first date, and I was busy on the second date. Is there a recorded version of any of the meetings that I would be able to watch or listen to?

Feedback to Response 18: -Thank you for your response. Over recent years we have reviewed the residential provision across the county including the previous offer at Welburn Hall School. Having considered the options, it was approved by the councils Executive to change the existing offer so that it was targeted to those with a fully assessed social care need for residential provision. This change was planned to allow existing students in residential provision to continue and leave as planned in the Summer 2023. Following this period, the proposed model would have meant that it was no longer the case that all children on roll at the school would automatically

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continue into residential post 16 provision unless they had an assessed need for the residential element of the provision.

Whilst we recognise that this proposal will be disappointing for some members of the school community the proposal to suspend residential provision for a planned period has been developed to mitigate, as much as possible, a future failure of the heating that would initiate mid-year disruption for young people. The local authority will continue to work with families and meet their assessed education and care needs.

We do not have a recorded version of the public meetings – but the presentation delivered at the meetings and the questions raised by members of the public in attendance will be incorporated in the report to Executive.

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Welburn Hall Governing Body Response Draft Response to NYCC Consultation on Temporary Closure

Background

The Governing Body have been struggling with the maintenance of this grade two, listed building for at least four years and have consistently pointed out to NYCC that the income does not provide sufficient resources for the maintenance and running costs of the building, a fact which shows up clearly in benchmarking against comparable schools.

We have also pointed out that there was no clarity for most of that time over the school's place in the SEND strategy, leading to difficulty in our future planning for the school.

We acknowledge that, since local authority review, this has been recognized and a good working relationship has been established with the officers appointed to assist us in the development of strategy, plans for the future of the school and to bring about a sustainable funding situation. Unfortunately the discovery of the structural problems has prevented us from carrying that forward.

Our Vision

Our vision has been to build upon the strengths of the school and its current staff, recognized by Ofsted as good both in educational and residential provision. We aim to maximize the opportunities that this site and our experienced personnel give us, both for our own students and parents, but also for potential outreach work with other schools.

Our plans for the future had been (and we hope still can be):

- To build on what we call The College Provision, that is sixth form work which develops students' skills for independent living and has recognised success in getting pupils into appropriate employment or further education. This provision is vital to prepare students for adulthood and to enable them to become confident, resourceful and independent young people. We seek to reduce their dependence on others and to increase their future choices and opportunities.
- To expand the number of our pupils on roll to a viable level, which has already meant that we have currently expanded by about 25%, building upon the strengths of our leadership and staff in developing cognitive skills, understanding and managing behaviour and meeting the needs of pupils with autism and with Social Emotional and Mental Health issues. This is in line with the projected needs of the Local Authority for places in the coming years. We have already developed Alternative provision which supports the latter group of students with SEMH through our farm, which is also providing support to pupils in mainstream schools. We seek to extend this provision further. We would also look to the provision of outreach support from our experienced staff to mainstream schools in developing their response to cognitive difficulties, behavioural issues, autism and SEMH within their

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schools. This would help to increase inclusion opportunities for young people with diverse needs in mainstream schools. Finally we recognized that the NYCC sends many pupils with high needs to provision outside the authority area at inflated costs. We had planned with NYCC officers to provide locally for 12 ambulant pupils with high needs who would otherwise be sent out of the county and had already begun the development of the Hall for that cohort. We still think that would be best for the parents and children as well as economically advantageous for ourselves and the local authority and would hope that proposal can be carried forward in the future. It is of course the latter which is at risk from the temporary closure. The day pupils who were taught in the Hall will have temporary accommodation provided under the proposals being consulted on.

Governors Response to the Consultation

Governors accept the need for a temporary halt to the residential provision for the new cohort of pupils because of the high risk of asbestos and disruption and noise if the heating system is indeed to be replaced. Although we have not seen any costings in relation to alternative heating systems, we accept that the officers responsible were clear that any alternative system would entail high level of disruption too.

We are aware that this option is still not fully costed or certain and that the local authority has to consider other options. The temporary halt to residential provision and its prompt reinstatement as soon as the work has been completed is **our preferred option** since the site contributes so much to the ethos and special character of the school and provides enormous opportunities for the future development of the school, including its' Alternative Provision. This option would also support the longer term future of the residential provision, which we have the expertise to provide and which is so needed in the area.

Other options:

- **The relocation of the school to another building within the local authority.**

This could mean a more modern, more energy efficient building. However it would be a different school if situated elsewhere and likely to be further away for its current cohort of pupils. It would also likely not have the superb opportunities currently available on the site for our Alternative Provision and for further future developments. The Management of transition to another site would be as challenging, if not more so, than the closure for two years and would affect all pupils, parents and staff.

- **Mothballing the Hall and building somewhere else on the site**

It was said that using for example the West Lawn was not viable but our neighbours would seem to have no objection and felt other local development suggested would be possible. It would seem this could be investigated further. However governors do not like the idea of a permanently mothballed hall building which would still need some maintenance to prevent it becoming unsafe. This would be unlikely to find approval with neighbours. A solution for the future of the hall would still need to be found in the long term.

The preferred option of the Governing Body is the continuation and development of the school on the current site and we are committed to making that as viable as possible. We

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need commitment to this as soon as possible and there will need to be, within that commitment, a recognition that the unique and valuable opportunities that come with this site for our pupils may not be entirely able to pay for themselves, even with maximum development and that some of the additional costs of such a site need to be partly funded centrally.

We also need the Local Authority to recognise a need to 'invest to save' i.e. to recognise that a greater spend now may save authority funding in the long-term future. While the cost of repairs to heating and drainage at Welburn Hall are great, they will over time prove to be less than the cost of sending children out of county to very costly, independent residential provision. The continued development of Welburn Hall will enable North Yorkshire students with complex needs to have these needs met effectively and more locally. The costs of such future provision by NYCC need to be carefully considered as part of the overall decision making.

We also feel that there is an opportunity for further dialogue and joint planning by the Local Authority and the Department for Education with regard to the future development of Welburn Hall School. Welburn Hall is a successful and highly effective school, but could be even more successful and effective with improved accommodation and provision. We recognise that the Local Authority alone does not have the funding to provide this, but inclusion in national school building developments and initiatives for the future could help facilitate such developments. While a recent bid by the Local Authority did not meet with success, we believe that continued efforts should be made in this area.

Alan Payne
Co-Chair of Governors