

Cheshire East Council abandons Crewe baths transformation and opts for new school development

Cheshire East has agreed to abandon plans for transforming a former Crewe swimming baths complex into a community hub, and will now seek government approval to repurpose the site for a school.

The economy and growth committee was informed this week that the cost of the proposed scheme, spearheaded by the Always Ahead charity, has escalated due to delays caused by concerns over the Flag Lane Baths structure.

A significant portion of the funding was expected from the Towns Fund grant, but Always Ahead would not be able to cover the additional costs within the stipulated deadline.

This week, the committee decided to withdraw the funding from the project and to request permission from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to redirect the £3.3m to other initiatives in the Crewe Towns Fund programme.

These include the Youth Zone, Mill Street corridor, history centre public realm, pocket parks and the Cumberland arena, reports [Cheshire Live](#).

The former baths, vacant since 2016, are now likely to be demolished to make room for an alternative provision school. Councillors hope to preserve the old facade as part of the new construction.

Sally Ashworth, from children's services, suggested that the alternative provision school in Crewe could assist up to 70

children who were finding mainstream education challenging.

She added that this would help them avoid going through the SEND process.

“We see lots of our children going into those independent special schools which have a high cost, and also moving out the area, so it’s keeping things local,” she explained.

Highlighting the lack of local registered alternatives, she pointed out: “We haven’t got alternative provision in Crewe registered, only our pupil referral unit, so it’s needed to avoid exclusions, but also to meet the needs of children before they escalate to the point where they might need a specialist school.”

Emphasising the impact on young lives, she added: “We do need to prevent exclusion, because it totally changes the trajectory of young people’s lives dramatically, and lots of the young people that we see in our criminal justice system have been excluded, and that really throws your life off.”

Expressing his support, Cllr Chris O’Leary (Sutton, Con) remarked: “I think it’s important to say that children that are excluded generally have much poorer outcomes than children who are not excluded,”.

Sharing his satisfaction with the new initiative, Cllr Ken Edwards (Bollington, Lab) commented: “I’m delighted to see this project coming forward in Crewe, and I’m particularly supportive of the change for the Flag Lane Baths to alternative provision for children who get themselves into a situation where they require that support.”

Councillor Fiona Wilson from Macclesfield expressed disappointment that the original scheme could not proceed but noted it was positive that the other initiatives would still benefit.

She further commented: “I think that also, from a Cheshire East point of view, we’re going to benefit massively from having additional special educational needs and alternative education provision.”

“I share all the comments made by both officers and members about the importance of that, but the key thing is having that provision near to where the child or the family live”.

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