

norse
CONSULTING

DESIGN

FAKENHAM NEW SEN SCHOOL

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL



“ *This was a fantastic project to be involved with, and it was very rewarding to help with the delivery of the County Council’s SEN programme.*

The new school has delivered much needed SEN pupil places in the west of the County, and it was a privilege to be part of the process from developing the early designs to the delivery on site.

Seeing the building in use is very satisfying, and it’s great that the feedback from both the Client and building users has been very positive. ”

DANIEL FORDHAM
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
NORSE CONSULTING



PROJECT

Norse Consulting were commissioned by the Client (Norfolk County Council) to undertake design services from RIBA Stage 0 – 6 for the delivery of a new SEN school in Fakenham.

The site is within the grounds of a former secondary school and sixth form that has been vacant for several years and is owned and maintained by the Client. To the south, the wider grounds are within Fakenham Conservation Area and part of the old school building (Highfield House) is Grade II listed. Although both the Conservation Area and listed building are outside the site boundary for the new school, they were considered in the development of the design and a Heritage Impact Assessment was prepared.

During the early stage of the project, consideration was given to making use of the existing buildings on the site for the new SEN school, but this option was not ultimately progressed as the layout and size of the rooms did not satisfy the requirements for a 21st century SEN school.

The new school site does not have a boundary directly to the highway, and access is via a parcel of land that also provides access to the remainder of the former school grounds and 2 adjacent properties. Managing this presented a particular challenge for the scheme during both the design and construction phases.

A public consultation event was held in the local community centre in January 2020; the scheme was generally well received and seen as beneficial to the local area. Local residents were also pleased that the setting of the Grade II listed building was being maintained and was not compromised by the location and scale of the single storey design.



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PROJECT

The design of the building was driven by the specific needs of the users, and the team spent time during the early design stages working with the Client and local SEN school head teachers to define the unique requirements; this included visiting local schools and reviewing best practice.

Following this the design was developed with two distinct teaching wings (one primary and one secondary) either side of a central core which housed the communal dining and main halls along with an activity studio, library and specialist teaching and therapy spaces along with staff accommodation. The

teaching wings were designed with a central corridor which opening out into a large 'transition space' giving access to groups of 4 classrooms. Each classroom was designed with direct access to a small 'individual room', and distinct calming and sensory spaces were provided in each teaching wing.

The layout of the main car park was developed with the end user to provide a specific pick-up and drop-off zone close to the building, and secure fencing along a defined secure line ensured that the private school grounds were distinct from the public car park area.

All the disciplines and Consultants in Norse Consulting have the knowledge and experience to advise, design, and facilitate educational projects. Having the majority of the disciplines and Consultants 'in house' makes Norse Consulting best placed to support and communicate the process

KEY BENEFITS

The project has seen a number of positive outcomes, including:

- Delivery of a new SEN education facility as part of the wider NCC investment in SEN provision across the county.
- The new school provides much needed, state of the art, bespoke education facilities for up to 96 ASD pupils from ages 5 – 16 in Fakenham. This has reduced the travel times for pupils in the west of the county, who previously travelled long distances for school.
- The school has provided new employment opportunities within Fakenham.
- The development has brought use back to a previously disused former secondary school/ sixth form site, which had been vacant for several years.
- Fabric first approach to energy efficiency with high levels of insulation.
- Use of natural ventilation strategy to all general teaching and group spaces.
- Adoption of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC): the building makes use of an infill Structural Framing System (SFS) in conjunction with the primary steel frame.

The project provided much needed specialised ASD provision in the west of Norfolk, which has also created employment opportunities for the local area. The main contractor focussed on using local sub-contractors where possible during the construction stage to provide a positive benefit to the local economy.



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