



Sustainable Communities for Learning - Rolling Programme: Well-being Impact Assessment Report

This report summarises the likely impact of the proposal on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Denbighshire, Wales and the world.

Assessment Number: 268

Brief description: The proposals for Sustainable Communities for Learning which would be delivered in partnership with the Welsh Government

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Responsible Service: Education and Children's Services

Localities affected by the proposal: Whole County,

Who will be affected by the proposal? The proposals will impact on the school communities of Denbighshire directly and indirectly through the investment applied will have an impact on the economic community of Denbighshire and beyond.

Was this impact assessment completed as a group? Yes

Summary and Conclusion

Before we look in detail at the contribution and impact of the proposal, it is important to consider how the proposal is applying the sustainable development principle. This means that we must act "in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Score for the sustainability of the approach

3 out of 4 stars

Actual score : 33 / 36.

Summary for each Sustainable Development principle

Long term

The Programme is looking at future investment and requires a long term approach to be considered. Future buildings will need to consider community use and achieve Net Carbon Zero.

Prevention

The proposals will impact on schools based in areas of socio economic disadvantage. The approach for greater community use and links could encourage additional community provision to develop in their communities.

Integration

The proposals will reflect areas of demographic change and likely changes around population, particularly arising from housing development from the Local Development Plan.

Collaboration

Individual projects will be developed with the school community and where appropriate active external stakeholders will be encouraged to contribute to the progression of projects.

Involvement

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The extent of consultation will be impacted by whether there is a need for formal consultation for any proposals from a school organisation perspective. This process is prescriptive and includes a number of stages which are mandated. Consultation will also take place with communities as part of the planning process including pre-planning consultation on medium / large sized projects.

Summary of impact

Well-being Goals	Overall Impact
A prosperous Denbighshire	Positive
A resilient Denbighshire	Neutral
A healthier Denbighshire	Positive
A more equal Denbighshire	Positive
A Denbighshire of cohesive communities	Positive
A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	Neutral
A globally responsible Denbighshire	Positive

Main conclusions

The progression of the programme for investment for Sustainable Communities for Learning should have a positive impact on Denbighshire. The construction phase will lead to increased investment in local companies and improve employment prospects. Site selection may have a negative impact on a resilient Denbighshire and this will need to be carefully considered. The provision of modern buildings should impact positively on a healthier and equal Denbighshire whilst providing an opportunity for a more cohesive community. The impact on Welsh Language will be guided by where investment is made.

The likely impact on Denbighshire, Wales and the world.

A prosperous Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

The investment in Sustainable Communities for Learning will provide school buildings which may be more energy efficient, provide economic regeneration during the construction phase and should increase the skill base of the local labour market. Lessons learnt from previous projects will need to be applied to the future approach to energy management.

Further actions required

The short term nature of construction projects may lead to jobs being available for a limited period. By working with the framework across North Wales to plan projects some of these issues may be overcome.

Positive impacts identified:

A low carbon society

Any projects progressed for new or refurbished buildings are likely to see significant improvements towards energy efficiency in those buildings. Through learning lessons from previous projects and by developing, delivering and managing-in-use zero/low carbon buildings the Sustainable Communities for Learning projects could reduce the running costs for the Authority from both a financial and carbon point of view alongside creating exemplar learning environments.

Quality communications, infrastructure and transport

In many instances we will seek to redevelop existing sites thus minimising change and seeking to take advantage of existing infrastructure. The development of new sites may encourage neighbouring sites to become active assisting development opportunities. The provision of new sites could act as a catalyst for investment in super fast broadband etc.

Economic development

The projects will contribute towards economic regeneration via the indicators to secure local spend and employment as part of the contract. The securement of contracts for local suppliers and trades will boost economic conditions in the short term.

Quality skills for the long term

An emphasis will be placed on employment of apprentices and work experience opportunities. The application of framework requirements should assist to enhance the skill base of the local labour market and allow such apprentices to be seen to be more skilled for the future.

Quality jobs for the long term

The main boost for quality jobs will be during the construction phase which will generally be between 12 - 24 months.

Childcare

The projects will seek to examine options for pre-school provision to be located with schools. This will be developed based on existing provision to ensure that a balance is achieved to ensure that existing providers remain viable.

Negative impacts identified:

A low carbon society

Projects which involve refurbishment will provide greater challenges in achieving net carbon zero within existing buildings.

The overall number of journeys within an area will be increased via the construction project. This will include delivery of materials and the travel of site workers. The re-location of schools may create additional journeys for pupils.

Quality communications, infrastructure and transport

No negative impacts identified.

Economic development

No negative impacts identified.

Quality skills for the long term

The need for increased training opportunities through the community benefits requirements may lead to a number of skilled operatives unable to secure long term jobs.

Quality jobs for the long term

The short term nature of the construction industry may lead to scenarios where trained up apprentices are unable to secure long term employment.

Childcare

No negative impacts identified.

A resilient Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Neutral

Justification for impact

The development of new sites or significant refurbishments could have an unintended negative consequence on the landscape of Denbighshire as the period of construction will lead to a disturbance of the natural environment. Any proposals will seek to mitigate these impacts.

Further actions required

Where possible design site layouts to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum and areas such as hedgerows be retained where possible. All projects will be required to consider diversity issues and undertake environmental impact assessments as part of the statutory planning process.

Consideration will need to be given to the future use of redundant sites which may arise from these proposals and how these may be used to assist targets re becoming net carbon zero by 2030.

Positive impacts identified:

Biodiversity and the natural environment

Within the external layout of school sites opportunities to preserve or enhance natural habitats will be maximised to allow such areas to be used to deliver the curriculum.

Biodiversity in the built environment

Options will be explored for new buildings to have nesting / roosting areas elsewhere on the site should existing habitat's be disturbed in the provision of a new / refurbished building.

Reducing waste, reusing and recycling

Projects are encouraged to meet stringent recycling targets and minimise waste being taken off site. Where demolition takes place unused rubble is sought to be kept onsite for use as base materials for car parks etc.

Reduced energy/fuel consumption

The improvement to buildings will lead to energy efficiency. Any rationalisation of buildings in poor condition will also have a positive impact on energy consumption.

People's awareness of the environment and biodiversity

The development of projects will give the opportunity for pupils and the local community to become more aware of the existing habitat where a project is taking place. Scope for contractors supporting biodiversity projects will be actively pursued.

Flood risk management

The selection of any site will consider land use policies and relevant WG guidance. Where any risk does arise the need to engineer a solution could lead to an overall reduction in flood risk.

Negative impacts identified:

Biodiversity and the natural environment

Development of new school buildings on green spaces is likely to have a greater impact on the

natural environment which will need to be mitigated with supportive measures.

Biodiversity in the built environment

The refurbishment or demolition of existing properties is likely to lead to the disturbance of wildlife who may occupy such properties.

Reducing waste, reusing and recycling

In many instances the buildings may be in a condition where they need replacing rather than refurbishment. This will require careful consideration to the treatment of the waste arising from the disused building.

Reduced energy/fuel consumption

Should the number of school sites be reduced there is a risk that traffic patterns for parents / pupils may be amended with longer journeys required. Refurbishment of buildings may present greater challenges to ensure that optimum energy management processes can be achieved.

People's awareness of the environment and biodiversity

Concerns may arise from the amendments to the local habitat leading to resistance to any individual project.

Flood risk management

There is a risk that the development of sites will reduce the extent of permeable land and increase risk of flood in extreme weather.

A healthier Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

The development of improved school buildings can have a positive impact on health by providing safer transport links with pedestrian and cycle access considered as part of the design. Improved learning environments can have a positive impact on the mental well-being of pupils and staff through better planned facilities which seek to maximise natural light etc.

Further actions required

Such buildings are likely to be utilised more by the community and this needs to be considered very carefully in the design process. The change process can have a detrimental impact on people's emotional and mental well-being and the planning for transition needs to be considered sympathetically, and where appropriate individual plans may be required for pupils.

Positive impacts identified:

A social and physical environment that encourage and support health and well-being

Any project will consider as a matter of course issues around access for the community both in terms of physical accessibility to the site and also how the building and site can be better utilised by the community outside of core school hours.

Access to good quality, healthy food

Any improvements to schools will see consideration to the catering experience for pupils attending schools. The investment in kitchen areas will enable improvements to the provision, and in recent projects there has been an increase in the number of pupils accessing school meals following the improvements in this area.

People's emotional and mental well-being

An improved learning environment will improve staff, pupil and community morale. The design of classrooms to modern standards will produce a better emotional environment for pupils i.e. noise reduction in classrooms, light levels. Consideration will be given to support areas within school buildings for pupils with greater requirements for designated support.

Access to healthcare

Options for community links for projects may have a positive impact via links with Health and the provision of support services from school sites.

Participation in leisure opportunities

The development of school facilities, particularly at secondary level may see consideration to the improvement in leisure facilities.

Negative impacts identified:

A social and physical environment that encourage and support health and well-being

No negative impacts identified.

Access to good quality, healthy food

No negative impacts identified.

People's emotional and mental well-being

Any change in provision can lead to resistance from staff, pupils, parents etc. Disruption may occur to local residents during the construction phase and we will work with contractors to minimise the impact of issues.

Access to healthcare

No negative impacts identified.

Participation in leisure opportunities

Improvements to school safeguarding may decrease access to school sites and informal play on school sites out of hours.

A more equal Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

The design of schools will be considered carefully to eliminate areas of concern which could be a barrier for people with protected characteristics.

Further actions required

Ongoing consultation with the schools to minimise the short term impact on pupils during any construction phases.

Positive impacts identified:

Improving the well-being of people with protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

All projects will consider accessibility as a key theme during the design stage to ensure that pupils with a disability are not denied access to the full learning experience. Consideration has been given to the provision of unisex toilets or non designation of toilet areas to ensure that transgender users are not discriminated against.

People who suffer discrimination or disadvantage

The proposals will equally positively impact on all groups.

People affected by socio-economic disadvantage and unequal outcomes

By improving the educational offer through new school facilities the performance of pupils could improve increasing scope for gaining employment.

Areas affected by socio-economic disadvantage

The provision of improved facilities in areas of socio-economic deprivation can lead to an improvement to the sense of value of individuals. This could be via improved access to learning to provide the route for children to escape existing inequalities. The scope for improved community access will also be considered during this process.

Negative impacts identified:

Improving the well-being of people with protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Careful consideration will be needed to ensure that during any phasing of projects, particularly with refurbishments, that access to the learning environment is not reduced. The interim arrangements may impact the wellbeing of pupils and consideration will be given to how this may be mitigated.

People who suffer discrimination or disadvantage

No negative impacts identified.

People affected by socio-economic disadvantage and unequal outcomes

No negative impacts identified.

Areas affected by socio-economic disadvantage

No negative impacts identified.

A Denbighshire of cohesive communities

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

By careful and considered design improved facilities can provide a positive impact on cohesive communities by providing facilities which can draw together the local community.

Further actions required

The construction stage is likely to have a negative impact on the local community on a short term basis. The project team will need to work with the contractor and the local community to minimise risks and to ensure clear communication at key times.

Positive impacts identified:

Safe communities and individuals

The design of any projects will ensure that careful consideration is given to site safety both during the construction phase and then when the site is fully occupied. Where possible improved surveillance will be sought in the design of buildings with passive supervision encouraged. Safeguarding will be considered with a clear demarcation between public and private zones both within the building and the overall site.

Community participation and resilience

The design of the school with more community access could allow the scope for local groups to use the sites, particularly outside of school hours. Consideration should be given to the provision of other activities taking place at the site.

The attractiveness of the area

The design of the buildings should enhance any area and this will be considered at the planning stage and form part of the consultation.

Connected communities

Issues around access to school will be considered as part of the planning process for any proposals / projects. Links to potential active travel routes to schools will be promoted as appropriate.

Rural resilience

Proposals will consider the impact on the rural community of any change in provision.

Negative impacts identified:

Safe communities and individuals

The construction phase will have an impact on the community via increased traffic and access to the site for employees and the delivery of building supplies. This could have an impact on individuals during this phase.

Community participation and resilience

In considering community facilities there is a need to ensure that the overall provision is not saturated leading to existing providers becoming unviable.

The attractiveness of the area

The construction phase is likely to have a short term detrimental impact on the local community. If any sites or buildings are no longer to be used a clear direction for the future use of the site should be considered at the business case stage of the project.

Connected communities

Proposals for change may require amendments to school locations and this may impact on existing patterns within the community.

Rural resilience

The loss of facilities in the rural community can have a negative impact on rural resilience and any proposal would need to consider options to negate any areas.

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Overall Impact

Neutral

Justification for impact

The impact will be dependent upon whether investment is made in schools / areas to promote Welsh Medium education. Without confirmation of projects it is difficult to confirm whether this is positive. As part of Band A of 21st Century Schools Programme the Council has invested significantly to increase access to Welsh Medium education. The Council has also recently received permission to submit business cases for investment in Welsh Medium Capital Projects by the Welsh Government. This investment to meet current need will need to be considered carefully in determining which projects move forward and whether they will impact on the Welsh Language.

Further actions required

Ensure that overall the benefits for Welsh Medium education are understood by parents when making decisions regarding school choices.

Positive impacts identified:

People using Welsh

An increase in capacity for Welsh Medium education will be a key theme nationally for the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and reflects the priorities in the Corporate Plan. An increase in the number of Welsh learners could increase the overall number of speakers within Denbighshire and Wales.

Promoting the Welsh language

The building should be encouraged to deliver bilingual signage within the school should it be an English medium school. All public areas will be required to have bilingual signage. Communication with residents and the local community will be bilingual.

Culture and heritage

Consideration will be given in the design stage to the local heritage of an area so that any building is sympathetic to its neighbourhood.

Negative impacts identified:

People using Welsh

The development of new facilities for English medium schools could see parents choose English medium schools rather than Welsh medium based on the quality of facilities rather than the offer available.

Promoting the Welsh language

No negative impacts identified

Culture and heritage

No negative impacts identified

A globally responsible Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

The procurement of contractors and the subsequent construction periods should have a positive impact. Adherence to procurement regulations and statutory responsibilities around Health and Safety will ensure that the projects address such areas. The requirement for Net Carbon Zero buildings as part of the Programme will support Denbighshire's position around reducing climate change.

Further actions required

Ensure that the requirements of the programme on a local and regional level are communicated to Framework providers so they are aware of future workstreams.

Positive impacts identified:

Local, national, international supply chains

The provision of new projects will include community benefits as a key part of the procurement process. This will ensure that the local supply chain can be involved in projects. Main contractors will be encouraged to hold meet the buyer events and provide opportunities for local suppliers to compete for work.

Human rights

All contractors will be expected to have first class health and safety procedures in place and these will be rigorously examined during the delivery of the project. Workers employed during the process will be expected to be treated equitably.

Broader service provision in the local area or the region

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The scoping of projects for the Programme will consider co-location of services on school sites to improve the overall quality of service for the community.

Reducing climate change

The proposed programme will have a positive contribution to the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero by 2030. Welsh Government announced that from 1st January 2022 all new build projects will be required to demonstrate delivery of Net Zero Carbon in operation.

Negative impacts identified:

Local, national, international supply chains

Risk that an increase in work creates unintended issues for the capacity of the local supply chain.

Human rights

No negative impacts identified

Broader service provision in the local area or the region

No negative impacts identified

Reducing climate change

Projects which involve refurbishment will provide greater challenges in achieving net carbon zero within existing buildings.