

Education

**Making SEN education local,
affordable and resilient**



**Education
route map**

Local authorities face a cumulative deficit of £4.6 billion by March 2026

02

Foreword

Local authorities face significant challenges in providing suitable and robust Special Educational Needs (SEN) provisions.

With fiscal pressures mounting, policy reforms accelerating, and the need for sustainable education growing. Public estate leaders must act now to ensure these provisions are sustainable and resilient for years to come. EHCP volumes are up over 60% in the past five years, and transport costs are draining local authority budgets.

This route map is a strategic resource designed to align vision, funding, and action, positioning your estate for transformation.

Every journey must begin somewhere, take your first step towards inclusive education today.

Our approach

Norse Group remains committed to supporting our local authority partners by providing additional capacity and specialist expertise to:

1

Adapt, extend, or redesign school estates to increase local capacity.

- **Adapt:** Modify existing spaces to meet new needs without major construction.

Example: Converting a classroom into a digital media lab.

🕒 Focused on flexibility and re-use.

- **Extend:** Add new space to the existing estate.

Example: Building a new wing or extra classrooms.

🕒 Increases capacity or function.

- **Redesign:** Reimagine or restructure how the estate is planned or used.

Example: Changing the layout to improve flow or create multi-use zones.

🕒 Often involves both physical and functional change.



Our approach

- 2 Reduce reliance on costly transport to out-of-area or out-of-county provision.
- 3 Help create joined-up education ecosystems that integrate SEN into community services.

We are responding with a shift of thinking to:

- 1 Education locally
- 2 Plan smart
- 3 Build for inclusion

This is the future of inclusive, intelligent education planning, and we're helping shape it. "Locally educated" means children stay connected, and councils gain control of spend and standards.



From miles to meters, funding SEN inclusion locally



Strategic aim

To fund the redesign of mainstream schools to support SEN pupils locally

1

To fund the redesign of mainstream schools to support SEN pupils.

2

Eliminating costly long distance transport.

3

Unlocking inclusive education.



The problem

1

SEN pupils require specialist placements

2

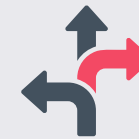
Most are transported to distant schools (average round trip: 15 miles [Campaign for Better Transport])

3

Annual transport spend £1.4 billion (based on 2024 figures)

4

Local mainstream provision is underutilised or not adapted (demographics are changing)



The opportunity

By investing in local mainstream redesigns to accommodate SEN pupils, we can:

1

Reduce average round trip

2

Reduce annual transport costs

3

Improve inclusion and educational consistency

4

Fund the transformation through the savings alone



Positioning for decision-makers

- 1 Aligns with local SEND strategy
- 2 Delivers medium-term savings and long-term value
- 3 Achieves transformation without drawing on core education budgets
- 4 Provides a replicable and scalable model for other regions.



Commercial case

Item	Value
Total capital cost (full grossed-up)	£78.3 million**
.....	
Total savings over 7 years	£84.1 million
.....	
Net surplus after full investment	£5.8 million
.....	
Ongoing annual saving (post FY34)	£12 million/year

Assumption: Existing average travel from 15 miles, reduced to 8 miles on average

**Assume implementation FY27



Strategic benefits

- 1 Self-funding within 7 years
- 2 Delivers full local SEN capacity without new external capital
- 3 Reduces reliance on long-distance or out-of-area placements
- 4 Improves inclusion, family stability, and local education delivery
- 5 Releases future savings to reinvest in specialist staff, equipment, or early intervention.



Capital investment required

1

Space for c.2,500 pupils
= **c.22,400m2**

2

Total capital cost
= **£78.3 million**



Funding strategy: Phased over 7 years

1

Years 1–5:

Use transport savings (**£60.1 million**)
to redesign space for **c.1,900 pupils**

2

Years 6–7:

Use continued savings (**£18.3 million**)
to fund the remainder (**c.500 pupils**)

SEND places created in Norfolk:

1354 Places Across **37** Sites



576

Completed



428

Completing
2025/26



350

Completing
2027

Why it matters now

Local authorities in England are under significant financial pressure due to rising SEN transport costs.

In 2023, the total spending by England's 37 county and rural authorities on school transport reached nearly £1.1 billion. This cost has the potential to place unsustainable pressure on local authorities if Central Government end the 'statutory override' as of March 2026. The clock is ticking to reduce costs and fund alternative provisions for the sector.

The hidden cost of inaction:

- 1 Surging transport costs
- 2 Growing demand
- 3 Increased tribunal actions against councils
- 4 Mounting costs to deliver SEN services, including transport and placement



The SEN education journey

To plan effectively, you need to know where you are.

Here's the five-stage journey:

- 1 **Strategy:** Adapting, extending, and redesigning estates to meet current needs and future demands.
- 2 **Feasibility:** Evaluating what's possible, what's cost-effective, and what's fit for purpose.
- 3 **Design:** Capturing key outcomes and objectives and bringing the vision to life.
- 4 **Delivery:** Undertaking the works needed to adapt, extend, or redesign the estate.
- 5 **In operation:** Monitoring, maintaining, and improving building performance over the lifetime of the asset.



Inclusive education in mainstream schools

Options:

- 1 New build schools:** A long-term solution that requires substantial investment, appropriate land, and good access routes. New builds offer resilient, future-ready environments designed to meet the evolving needs of local communities.
- 2 Adapt:** A cost-effective approach that repurposes existing spaces. While limited in capacity and scalability, it can provide quick wins to address immediate needs.
- 3 Extend:** Increases provision by expanding existing facilities. This approach helps unlock vital space and supports growing demand without starting from scratch.
- 4 Redesign:** A strategic and affordable solution that reimagines existing layouts, often by re-using older buildings. This creates flexible, inclusive spaces tailored to the diverse needs of students.



The cost of inaction

Doing nothing will increase long-term costs, widen provision gaps, and deepen system strain.

- 1 EHCP demand has surged over 60% in five years – pressure will keep rising.
- 2 Out-of-area placements and rising transport costs are draining local budgets.
- 3 Inaction risks non-compliance with statutory duties, legal challenges, and reputational damage.
- 4 Children miss out on the right support, impacting outcomes and future public service demand.
- 5 Ageing, unsuitable buildings become harder and costlier to adapt later.

Waiting comes at a cost to budgets, to services, and to the communities we serve. Is now the time to take the next step?



How can we support your journey?

- 1 Asset optimisation
- 2 Feasibility studies
- 3 Design and planning support
- 4 Project management
- 5 Cost consultancy
- 6 Contract advice
- 7 Disabled adaptation and equipment





Case study

Bure Park Academy

SEMH school and accommodation

Client:

Norfolk County Council

Norse Group in collaboration with Norfolk County Council, developed the first purpose-built SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) school with residential accommodation in East Norfolk.

This project addresses the urgent need for specialised educational provision for pupils with SEMH diagnoses in the Great Yarmouth area. Previously, there was no local provision for these students, leading to high costs and logistical challenges.

The new Bure Park Academy provides a dedicated environment tailored to the needs of SEMH students, ensuring they receive the support they require close to home



Norse services provided

• Architecture • Building Surveying • Interior Design •
M&E Engineering • Quantity Surveying • Structural Engineering



Key achievements

1 **Delivery of a new SEMH School:**

The project has successfully delivered a new SEMH school as part of Norfolk County Council's investment in SEN (Special Educational Needs) provision across the county. This is the first school of its kind in East Norfolk.

2 **Energy efficiency:** The school features an array of photovoltaic panels on the roof, enhancing energy efficiency. The thermal efficiency of both the new and retained buildings has been upgraded to meet and exceed current Building Regulations.

3 **Modern methods of construction (MMC):** The main new build incorporates structural steelwork and an on-site Structural Framing System (SFS), while the two-storey dormitory accommodation is timber-framed.

4 **Community engagement:**

A public consultation event in 2019 allowed the local community to voice their concerns and approvals, influencing the final design and layout of the school.

5 **Heritage preservation:** The project retained and integrated the original Alderman Swindel School building, respecting its heritage value while providing modern educational facilities.

6 **Accelerated program:**

Norse Group demonstrated the ability to start works on site quickly by procuring the construction package with a dedicated early demolition element.



Case study

West Oaks

Woodhouse SEN campus expansion

Client:

Leeds City Council

Norse Group collaborated with Leeds City Council to deliver an 80-place SEN campus extension at West Oaks School in Hyde Park & Woodhouse, transforming a constrained and underutilised site into an award-worthy facility that enhances educational access for vulnerable learners.

Key Achievements

- 1 Specialist education delivery:** Delivered a highly tailored SEN facility, seamlessly integrated with legacy accommodation, on a narrow, tree-lined site without disrupting ongoing school operations.
- 2 Asset regeneration:** Transformed car parks and brownfield pockets into a cohesive and connected educational campus, enhancing the school's visibility and integration within the local community.



Norse services provided

- Architecture • Project Management • Strategic Advisory
- Stakeholder Engagement • Landscape Architecture



Key achievements

1 Designing for complex needs:

Created inclusive learning environments including a sensory room, life skills flat, podcast studio, rebound therapy space, and dance studio, aligned to OFSTED 'outstanding' standards.

2 Environmental and construction

sensitivity: Minimised environmental impact by retaining key landscape features and managing level changes to avoid tree loss, while construction phasing was meticulously planned to ensure pupil wellbeing and daily collaboration with school leaders.

3 Resilience through challenges:

Executed the project through the pandemic, maintaining safety, progress, and high standards despite heightened operational complexity.

4 Community and educational

legacy: Created defined external areas and forest learning spaces using retained natural features, providing a long-term platform for outdoor learning and future curriculum development.

5 Collaborative success:

Delivered ahead of programme and on budget through strong partnerships, transparent communication, and a shared commitment to pupil outcomes.



Case study

Heltwate SEN School 'The Jubilee Building'

Client:
Peterborough City Council

Peterborough City Council, in collaboration with Norse Group, developed a new specialist school building for Heltwate SEN School in Peterborough.

This project addresses the evolving needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) by providing modern, purpose-built facilities.

Previously, the site was occupied by the derelict Silver Jubilee Pub, which had been a source of anti-social behaviour.

The new school building not only provides much-needed educational space but also regenerates the area, contributing positively to the local community.



Norse services provided

- Architecture • Landscape • Structural Engineering • M&E Design
- Civil Engineering • Quantity Surveying • Employer's Agent



Key achievements

1 Delivery of a new sen

school building: The project has successfully delivered a new specialist school building, providing new classrooms, Accessible Hygiene Rooms, a Hall, Kitchen, Food Technology, Sensory Rooms, and Offices. This facility accommodates approximately 40 pupils.

2 Community regeneration:

The project has transformed the site of the former Silver Jubilee Pub, which had been derelict for years, into a valuable community asset.

3 Additional parking facilities:

The project has created much-needed additional parking, alleviating local parking pressures.

4 Overcoming challenges:

Despite challenges such as COVID-19, material shortages, and rising costs, the project was completed successfully, with the school ready for occupation by September 2023.

5 Stakeholder engagement:

Norse Group engaged effectively with all stakeholders, including the school, community, local councillors, and the local authority, ensuring the project's success.

Future

Download the
Decarbonisation route
map, to find out how
Norse Group can provide
the capacity and expertise
to decarbonise your
education estates



Planning



norsegroup.co.uk