This tab is used to set out a high-level business case for the initiative, explaining why change may be needed and capturing the potential options that could be explored further.
Complete this tab with concise, evidence-based information for each possible option. Summarise what each option involves, the expected costs and benefits, key success measures and other strategic, commercial, management and financial considerations. Focus on the information needed to compare options at this stage; detailed appraisal, costing and delivery planning will be developed later as part of the Detailed Business Case.

*Complete the analysis below for **at least one option** . Add further options where needed to document/compare the potential approaches for this initiative.*

Key:

Cell requires manual input	
Calculation cell - **DO NOT EDIT**	
Pre-populated cell - **DO NOT EDIT**	
Example cell - please **REMOVE** from completed business case	

The Initiative:	
Summarise the case for change, the proposed initiative and the options you plan to explore.	West Berkshire is experiencing increasing demand for specialist SEND provision, particularly for pupils with complex autism, creating pressure on existing placements and increasing reliance on costly independent and out-of-area provision. Expanding local specialist capacity within mainstream schools is a key priority within the West Berkshire SEND Reform Plan, enabling more children and young people to have their needs met closer to home while improving outcomes and delivering better value for money. The proposed Specialist Autism Inclusion Base at John O'Gaunt School will provide 25 specialist places for pupils with complex autism. The provision would operate as a council-funded specialist inclusion base, enabling pupils to access targeted specialist support while maintaining meaningful links to mainstream education, social opportunities and wider school life. This model supports inclusive practice and provides a high-quality local alternative to independent placements. The requirement is to establish a dedicated specialist facility capable of accommodating the proposed 25 places and the associated teaching, intervention and support spaces required. The proposal will focus on identifying the most suitable accommodation solution on the school site, ensuring the provision can meet demand while supporting the Council's strategic objective of increasing local SEND capacity and reducing reliance on external provision

Current Arrangements:	
Describe how the issue is managed currently.	Currently, the needs of secondary-aged pupils with complex autism are met through a combination of mainstream school support, existing specialist provision and placements in specialist settings both within and outside West Berkshire. Demand for specialist provision continues to increase, placing pressure on available places and creating challenges in ensuring that pupils can access the right support at the right time and as close to home as possible. John O'Gaunt School does not currently have a dedicated Autism Inclusion Base capable of supporting pupils who require a high level of specialist provision while maintaining access to mainstream education. Existing support is delivered through mainstream SEND arrangements, alongside specialist advice and support services where appropriate. The West Berkshire SEND Reform Plan identifies the need to increase specialist capacity within mainstream schools to support inclusion and improve access to local provision. Expanding specialist provision at John O'Gaunt School would help address a gap in local secondary SEND capacity, enabling more pupils with complex autism to access specialist support while remaining connected to their local community and mainstream school

Financial Summary:

Remove / add number of options as required

	Option 1 - Autism Unit
Total costs	4,445,640
Total benefits	(626,400)
Net costs / benefits	**3,819,240**
Return on investment	-86%

Please complete the following analysis for each option you plan to explore under this Initiative.

Option 1 - Specialist Inclusion Unit:

Summary:	
Include a summary of what the option involves.	The proposed option is the development of a purpose-built Autism Inclusion Base at John O'Gaunt to increase local specialist secondary provision for pupils with complex autism. The provision would provide 25 places for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and support West Berkshire's wider SEND sufficiency strategy by expanding specialist capacity within a mainstream school setting. The Inclusion Base forms part of John O'Gaunt's Department for Education (DfE) School Rebuilding Programme and is intended to be delivered alongside the wider redevelopment of the school. At this stage, it has not been determined whether the Inclusion Base will be delivered directly by the DfE as part of the rebuilding programme or separately by West Berkshire Council. However, the provision is being planned as an integral element of the overall redevelopment of the school site. The facility would comprise dedicated teaching, intervention and sensory spaces, staff accommodation, meeting areas, appropriate hygiene facilities and outdoor space designed to support pupils' wellbeing and learning needs. The provision would enable pupils to access specialist support while maintaining opportunities to participate in

Cost-Benefit Analysis:

Costs - Financial:

Summarise the expected financial costs of delivering this option and how they will be funded, for example through Council funding, grants, CIL, S106 contributions, transformation, revenue.

The estimated capital cost of delivering the proposed Autism Inclusion Base at John O'Gaunt is approximately £4.45 million, based on current feasibility estimates. This includes construction, external works, project contingency, professional fees and associated project costs.

The development of the Inclusion Base forms part of the Council's wider strategy to increase local SEND capacity and improve access to specialist provision within mainstream schools. The proposal will support the delivery of additional specialist places for pupils with complex autism and contribute to the Council's SEND sufficiency objectives.

As the Inclusion Base is being developed in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE) School Rebuilding Programme at John O'Gaunt, the final delivery and funding arrangements are yet to be confirmed.

2026/27 - Basic Need (to be vired from SEND Infrastructure
2027/28 - HNPCA Grant
2028/29 - Basic Need Grant
2029/30 - £910,160 Basic Need Grant and £588,860 CIL funding
2030/31 - CIL funding

Include a breakdown of these costs and how they are expected to be profiled across a 5-year appraisal period below. Use additional tabs for calculations where required.

	(£'000)					
Period	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total**
Financial year	**FY26/27**	**FY27/28**	**FY28/29**	**FY29/30**	**FY30/31**	
Costs						
	*Costs should be recorded as **positives** '+'*					
Design	78,260	156,520	84,280	42,140		361,200
Construction			2,383,980	1,191,990		3,575,970
Project Contingency			132,440	264,890		397,330
Retention					111,140	111,140
Total costs	**78,260**	**156,520**	**2,600,700**	**1,499,020**	**111,140**	**4,445,640**

Benefits - Financial:

Provide a summary of the financial benefits, i.e. how will the Council generate a return on the investment.

The proposed Specialist Autism Inclusion Base will deliver significant cost avoidance by increasing local specialist secondary autism capacity and reducing reliance on high-cost independent and non-maintained specialist school placements (INMSS), Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) packages and Alternative Provision (AP). The provision will create 25-30 specialist places enabling more children and young people with complex autism to be educated closer to home within West Berkshire.

The Inclusion Base will be introduced on a phased basis, with pupil numbers increasing annually towards full capacity. Based on current demand and placement trends, it is anticipated that a proportion of pupils attending the provision would otherwise require independent specialist placements costing in excess of £70,000 per pupil per year. The project is forecast to avoid approximately £626,400 of expenditure over the first five years through reduced INMSS, EOTAS and Alternative Provision costs.

Additional cost avoidance is expected through reduced Home to School Transport expenditure, fewer placement breakdowns and improved educational outcomes, although these benefits have not yet been quantified. The proposal therefore supports the Council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy whilst contributing to a more sustainable and cost-effective local SEND system.

Include a breakdown of these benefits and how they are expected to be profiled across a 5-year appraisal period below. Use additional tabs for calculations where required.

	(£'000)					
Period	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total**
Financial year	**FY26/27**	**FY27/28**	**FY28/29**	**FY29/30**	**FY30/31**	
Benefits						
	*Benefits should be recorded as **negatives** '-'*					
Placement Cost Avoidance INMSS				(140,000)	(280,000)	(420,000)
Placement Cost Avoidance EOTAS				(30,000)	(60,000)	(90,000)
Placement Cost Avoidance AP (following exclusion)				(38,800)	(77,600)	(116,400)
[Benefit 4]						0
Total Benefits	**0**	**0**	**0**	**(208,800)**	**(417,600)**	**(626,400)**

Financial Metrics:	
Metric	
1) Net cost / (benefit)	£ 3,819,240
2) Return on Investment	-86%

Benefits - Non-Financial:

Provide details of any other non-financial benefits that would result from delivering the option, e.g. service / operational, social, environmental, strategic etc.	The proposed Autism Inclusion Base would deliver a range of non-financial benefits aligned with the Council's SEND, education and inclusion objectives. The provision would increase local specialist capacity for pupils with complex autism, enabling more children and young people to access education within their local community while maintaining appropriate links with mainstream education. This would provide greater opportunities for inclusion, participation in school life and the development of positive social relationships. Educationally, the Inclusion Base would provide an environment tailored to the needs of pupils with complex autism, including specialist teaching spaces, intervention and sensory areas, dedicated support facilities and outdoor provision to support wellbeing and regulation. This will improve pupil engagement, attendance, independence, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Measures of Success:

What are the option's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for tracking success?

KPI	Measure	Purpose
Long-term cost savings for West Berkshire Council	*Annual cost avoidance compared to independent and non-maintained specialist*	*To measure the financial benefit of providing local specialist capacity*
Reduction in out-of-area placements	*Number of pupils educated locally rather than in external specialist placements*	*To measure the impact on SEND sufficiency and local capacity*

Other considerations:

Summarise any other important considerations at this stage across the strategic, commercial, management and financial areas below. Please ensure each section is completed.

1) Strategic - i.e. strategic priorities, policy alignment, outcomes, stakeholders and wider organisational objectives.	The proposal directly supports West Berkshire Council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy and SEND Reform Plan by increasing local specialist capacity for pupils with complex autism within a mainstream school environment. It aligns with the Council's objectives to improve inclusion, meet needs closer to home and expand local specialist provision for children and young people with SEND.
2) Commercial - i.e. market capacity, procurement route, supplier interest, contract implications, deliverability and value for money.	The Inclusion Base is being developed alongside the DfE School Rebuilding Programme at John O'Gaunt. At this stage, it has not been confirmed whether the Inclusion Base will be delivered directly by the DfE as part of the rebuilding programme or separately by West Berkshire Council. The preferred delivery route, procurement approach and contractual arrangements will be determined as the project develops. Further feasibility work, design development and stakeholder engagement will be required to confirm delivery
3) Management - i.e. governance, resourcing, delivery capability, timescales, risks, dependencies, change management and stakeholder engagement.	The project will be managed in accordance with the Council's established governance arrangements for capital and SEND infrastructure projects. Appropriate governance, reporting and decision-making processes will be applied throughout project development and delivery, with oversight through the Council's capital programme and SEND governance arrangements. The Inclusion Base is dependent on the wider redevelopment programme at John O'Gaunt and will require
4) Financial - i.e. affordability, funding sources, whole-life costs, savings, income, budget impact and financial risks.	The current estimated capital cost of the proposed Autism Inclusion Base is approximately £4.45 million. This estimate includes design fees, construction costs, project contingency and associated project costs based on current feasibility information. The project forms part of the Council's wider strategy to increase local SEND capacity and improve access to
Can this option be delivered using current resources?	Yes. We have a capable Education and property team who have experience in delivering this type of facility. The avaliabilty of WBC project managers is a concern due to recruitment challenges and high turnover of staff during
What specialist skills are required?	The project will be delivered using established Council resources and governance arrangements through the
What are the top 3 risks associated with delivering this option?	Risk 1 — Dependency on the DfE School Rebuilding Programme Risk 2 — Affordability / Future funding uncertainty Risk 3 — Agreement of Delivery Responsibilities