

School Places in Highworth**CABINET****20 May 2009****Author:** Cabinet Member for Children Services and Group Director, Children**Parish / Wards Affected:** Highworth**Purpose**

To report on a proposal to address surplus school places in the Highworth area taking account of longer-term demographic trends

Recommendation

Cabinet is requested to:

- (1) consider the issues set out in the report regarding the increasing number of surplus primary school places in the Highworth area, which are forecast to continue to rise in the long-term;
- (2) authorise the Group Director, Children to undertake “pre-statutory” consultation with parents, staff and Governors, together with other key stakeholders, on a proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School from September 2010 and to report back on the results of the consultation in Autumn 2009.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 There are an increasing number of surplus primary school places in the Highworth area and this trend is set to continue in the long-term.
- 1.2 It is important that the Local Authority has in place a clear strategy for addressing excessive levels of surplus school places, as they do not represent good value for money and can create significant problems with school organisation and financial viability. In addition, it is an expectation of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Audit Commission that Local Authorities address this issue.
- 1.3 This report sets out a proposal for reducing the number of surplus places in the Highworth area from September 2010.

2. Detail**Background**

- 2.1 Pupil numbers are forecast to significantly decline in the Highworth area over the coming years. As at November 2008, the level of surplus places across the Highworth Cluster of primary schools was 14%.

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However, this is projected to increase to 25% by 2013 (31% if St Andrews Primary School is excluded). Overall, the four schools in Highworth have the capacity to offer 812 school places. However, the demand for these places is expected to decrease to 560 places by 2013, leaving 252 places unoccupied by that date. The trend analysis indicates that pupil numbers will continue to decline beyond 2013, as shown in **Appendix 1**.

- 2.2 The primary pupil forecasts are set out in **Appendix 1** attached. These were compiled in November 2008. As indicated, a significant proportion of this surplus is currently located in one of the primary schools, although by 2013 it is projected that four of the schools will have over 10% surplus capacity and two of the schools more than 20%.
- 2.3 It should also be noted that St Andrews Primary School, although in the Cluster, is not located in Highworth and is projected to remain full throughout this period. It has been excluded, therefore, from the data shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.4 A map of the Highworth area is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Discussions held so far

- 2.5 There have been a number of discussions held with schools in the area, including at meetings in June and December 2008 and March 2009 of the Head Teachers' Cluster Group. Chairs of Governing Bodies were also invited to attend the December and March meetings of the Cluster Group.
- 2.6 The clear view from the majority attending these meetings has been that the Cluster Group is keen to see action taken to address surplus places sooner rather than later. Head Teachers and Governors wish to have an input into this process throughout.
- 2.7 A separate meeting took place in February 2009 with the Cabinet Member for Children Services and Ward Councillors. Ward Councillors were also invited to the March 2009 meeting referred to above.
- 2.8 Discussions have also been held with parents and staff of Northview Primary School, including meetings in November 2008 and March 2009. In addition, parents organised a public, open meeting at Northview Primary School on 25 April and those attending included, as well as parents and members of the local community, the local MP, the Lead Member for Children Services, officers and several local Head Teachers.

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School Places Strategy

- 2.9 The Local Authority's School Places Strategy, as set out in the School Organisation Plan, requires "excessive" surplus school places to be addressed. The purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that:
- schools do not have excessive levels of surplus capacity, which can create problems with school organisation and financial viability;
 - value for money can be demonstrated, particularly in a context of scarce resources – excessive surplus places do not represent good value for money.
- 2.10 The Audit Commission recommends surplus places to be in the region of 6-8% in overall terms, in order to allow a level of flexibility in terms of admissions and parents achieving first preferences for schools, where this is possible. Swindon is within this range in relation to secondary places and just above it for primary places. The Local Authority's School Organisation Plan and Primary Capital Strategy set out the approach to addressing "excessive" levels of surplus school places.
- 2.11 However, it does need to be borne in mind that Swindon is a growth area and that some level of surplus capacity is, therefore, essential to absorb children coming from new housing developments. At an individual school level, the benchmark for considering action to remove surplus capacity is 25%, although future trends in forecast pupil numbers will also be taken into account.

Potential Future Housing Developments

- 2.12 In the longer-term, there are a number of possible housing developments in the Highworth area that could generate additional primary-aged pupils. Based on the standard formula that is used to estimate primary pupil numbers, it is forecast that – in total – these could amount to approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ form of entry ($\frac{1}{3}$ FE). However, this does assume that all of these possible developments will materialise. At this stage, these potential developments are flagged up in the Swindon Strategic Housing Availability Assessment (SSHAA) but are not definite allocations and do not have planning permission.
- 2.13 Forecast pupil numbers shown in **Appendix 1** indicate that by September 2013 there will be a need for only 2.7 FE, compared to the 4FE currently available (excluding St Andrews Primary School).

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However, bearing in mind the SSHAA referred to above, the prudent approach would be to remove only ½ FE at this stage but with the flexibility to reduce by a whole FE, if required.

Rural Schools

2.14 All the primary schools in Highworth are designated as “rural schools” by the DCSF. The DCSF classifies schools as “urban” or “rural” depending on whether the majority of the population falls inside a settlement of population of 10,000 or more. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that a Local Authority or Governing Body, when considering proposing the closure of a rural primary school, *must* consider the following matters as part of formulating their proposals:

- The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools;
- Any increase in the use of motor vehicles that is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school and the likely effects of any such increase;
- Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.

2.15 In addition, the Decision Makers’ Guidance states:

“In considering statutory proposals to close a rural school, the Decision Maker should have regard to the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities. There is, therefore, a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school should never close but the case for closure should be strong and the proposals clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.”

2.16 Cabinet will therefore wish to consider the above issues as part of this process, in particular:

- the impact on the local community of any proposal;
 - that there is not expected to be any additional transport costs that arise;
 - the effect on the use of cars (see section below on Travel and Transport Implications);
 - that there are alternative schools available in the Highworth area.
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Statutory processes

- 2.17 If a “new” school is being legally established, then this will be subject to statutory competition arrangements. The Local Authority is required to run a competition process to invite bids. These will determine who eventually runs the school.
- 2.18 It may be possible, depending on the circumstances, to obtain an exemption from the DCSF. This has been achieved in relation to the amalgamation of Infant and Junior schools. It may also be the case that the final decision on this is determined by the Schools Adjudicator rather than Cabinet.
- 2.19 However, if a school is being “extended”, then it is not necessary to follow the competition arrangements, as it is not regarded as a “new” school. This would apply to the proposal that is being put forward in this report.
- 2.20 In order to extend a school or close a school, a statutory process has to be followed, details of which are set out later in this report under the heading “Legal /Human Rights implications”.

Highworth – Surplus Places Strategy

- 2.21 As indicated in Paragraph 2.1 above, primary pupil numbers are forecast to decline significantly in the Highworth area over the coming years. If no action is taken, the level of surplus places is projected to increase to 25% by 2013. It is, therefore, essential that the Local Authority has in place a clear strategy for addressing this trend, as referred to earlier in the report.
- 2.22 As Highworth is a relatively discrete population area, it makes sense for the demography and surplus capacity to be considered initially across the town, rather than at an individual school level. It should also be stressed that this is an issue about surplus school places due to the changing age profile of the Highworth area and is not about falling numbers in individual school catchment areas. It is also not specifically about school standards, as all the Highworth schools currently offer pupils a good quality education.
- 2.23 In the light of the forecast pupil numbers shown in **Appendix 1**, there is a need to remove at least ½ FE (ie, 105 places). As mentioned earlier, removing a whole FE (ie, 210 places) would leave the Highworth area at risk of having an inadequate number of places were pupil numbers to increase in future years. This could then result in the need to transport

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pupils to schools in the urban area. This would clearly be unsatisfactory for parents and pupils and would add costs to the transport budget. It would also be inappropriate in terms of the Authority's approach of locating schools, as far as possible, at the heart of their communities.

Options for Removing Surplus Capacity

2.24 In relation to Highworth, a number of different options have been considered for reducing surplus capacity and these are set out in more detail under **Alternative Options** below. These options include:

- closing an existing school and extending another school;
- reducing the admission number of a school(s);
- amalgamating two schools;
- a federation arrangement.

2.25 Having carefully considered these options in detail, it is felt that the most viable way forward would be to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by ½ FE. The key issues in relation to this are as follows:

- This would have the effect of removing ½ FE, the minimum required for the foreseeable future.
- School closures are always regarded as a "last resort". However, the level of surplus capacity in Northview Primary School was 43% as at November 2008 and was last forecast to increase to 64% by 2013, as indicated in **Appendix 1**. For September 2009 Reception admissions, only one offer of a place has been made, although there are 30 places available. It should also be noted that even at the closing date for primary admissions in November 2008 only one first preference was received for Northview Primary School.
- It is currently expected that the number of pupils in the School in September 2009 will be around 70, with 210 places available. This raises serious questions about the future viability of the School, although it should be stressed again that Northview Primary School currently offers a good quality education to its pupils.
- A major building project is being undertaken at Westrop Primary School and is due to be completed later this year. This comprises replacement teaching spaces, a new Children's Centre and accommodation for a relocated Pre-school Playgroup.
- Were pupil numbers to continue to decline, then there remains scope for Westrop Primary School to revert to 1FE. However, by expanding the School potentially to 1½ FE, this provides the flexibility to absorb

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any increase in pupil numbers in the longer-term (see section on Potential Future Housing Developments above), as well as from September 2010.

- There will be a requirement from September 2010, therefore, for there to be sufficient places available in primary schools in Highworth to accommodate all pupils from Northview Primary School. This will be achieved mainly as a result of the increasing surplus capacity in the existing schools as a result of the demographic changes referred to earlier and the potential to expand Westrop Primary School by ½ FE. Subject to the completion of a feasibility study, it is currently expected that additional accommodation would be required at Westrop Primary School for an interim period to ensure sufficient places were available from September 2010. This could involve the provision of a double mobile classroom (although alternative options are also being considered) and is referred to in more detail under the Financial Implications section of the report.
- There is a presumption against closing “rural” schools and there would, therefore, need to be strong arguments for agreeing a closure (see paragraphs 2.14 – 2.16 above).
- Most of the Highworth Cluster Group of schools supports this option.
- This option would not be subject to the competition arrangements and the Cabinet Panel would make the final decision.

2.26 It should also be noted that the earliest implementation date for a reorganisation of schools in Highworth is September 2010. The section below on **Next Steps** sets out more fully the actions and timeline.

Northview Primary School

2.27 In relation to the recent background on Northview Primary School, the school went into “special measures” in October 2005, following an Ofsted Inspection. Since that time, Northview has received a high level of support from the Local Authority, which was recognised in the notes of monitoring visits by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate and which are recorded on the Ofsted website. The School was removed from “special measures” in February 2007 and continued to receive support from the Authority to implement the Primary National Strategy and to increase leadership capacity.

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- 2.28 The Head Teacher of Northview Primary School has been absent from work, due to sickness, since Autumn 2008. The Local Authority made arrangements with the Governing Body that another Head Teacher in the locality should be made available and this has worked well. This approach will only be until August 2009. However, after this date, a new arrangement will be put in place to support the School, in conjunction with the Governing Body. The view that was expressed at the most recent parents' meeting is that, with strong leadership, the School can reverse the decline in pupil numbers.
- 2.29 Implications for school improvement and standards in the Highworth area have been carefully considered. It is the view of the officers that the proposal set out in this report would have the most positive impact on improving standards and achievement in the longer-term. Equally, if the significant reduction in pupil numbers continues at Northview Primary School, this could well start to adversely affect standards and achievement, despite the best efforts of staff and Governors, even though this is not currently the case. In light of this, expanding Westrop Primary School would help to build capacity to raise standards.
- 2.30 The role of the Local Authority has already been referred to. In addition, under the Education Act 2002, the Governing Body has a general legal responsibility for the conduct of a school, with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. Governors should have a strategic view of how to raise standards and set in place arrangements to monitor progress against targets. Their range of duties and powers includes setting targets for pupil achievement, managing the school's finances, ensuring the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, appointing staff and reviewing staff performance (including the leadership of the school) in collaboration with an appointed School Improvement Adviser (SIP). Under the 2006 Education & Inspections Act, the Governing Body must also promote community cohesion and have regard to the Children & Young People's Plan published by the Local Authority and any views expressed by parents.
- 2.31 **In summary**, the reasons for the proposal to close Northview Primary School are set out throughout this report, in particular, in paragraph 2.25 above and at the end of the section below on **Alternative Options**. There is an ongoing downward trend in pupil numbers in Highworth due to the changing age profile of the area. Potential future housing developments in the area (see paragraphs 2.12 and 2.13 above) are not forecast to significantly reverse this trend. This trend is impacting particularly on Northview Primary School, with only one offer of a place made for September 2009 and, currently, only around 70 pupils expected to be in

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the School this September. This level of surplus is likely to adversely affect school standards, school organisation and financial viability in the longer-term. The Local Authority is required to address “excessive” surplus capacity in its area, in particular, for those schools with over 25%. Other options for action are set out below in the section on **Alternative Options**.

Travel and Traffic Implications

- 2.32 Attached as **Appendix 3** is the report of the Council’s School Travel Adviser on the travel and traffic implications of this proposal. Cabinet is asked to examine carefully these implications, particularly as they relate to the proposal being put forward and to paragraph 2.14 above on Rural Schools. Any reorganisation proposal has the potential to increase vehicle traffic, particularly if families need to travel a greater distance to an alternative school. **Appendix 3** sets out the key travel and traffic implications, in particular, those associated with crossing the A361. Actions may be taken, however, to mitigate some of these effects. For example, this could include improved pedestrian or cycling facilities, high profile campaigns within schools to promote sustainable travel, informal or formal car-sharing networks, walking buses, etc.

Next Steps

- 2.33 If there is to be a reorganisation of schools in Highworth, then the next steps proposed in this process are as follows:
- (a) Pre-statutory consultation
Following this Cabinet report and, if agreed, a period of pre-statutory consultation would be carried out. This normally lasts six weeks and includes meetings with parents, staff and Governing Bodies of the schools affected. It is also proposed that pupils are asked their views. A brochure would be sent out in advance of this consultation exercise, setting out details of the proposals/options and providing a “voting” slip to return to the Local Authority.
 - (b) Further report to Cabinet
Following the pre-statutory consultation, there would need to be a further report to Cabinet on the results. Cabinet may then decide either to take no further action or that a statutory consultation exercise is undertaken on the specific proposal.
 - (c) Statutory consultation
The process involves the publication of Public Notices for a six-week period. This provides the opportunity for stakeholders to make written comments/objections to the proposal.

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- (d) Decision-making
The final decision on this proposal would be made by a Panel of Cabinet, with a right of appeal by certain bodies (further details on rights of appeal are set out later in this report under the heading "Legal /Human Rights Implications").
- (e) Preparation period
If a decision is taken to agree the proposal, then work will need to be undertaken over a six to nine-month period to prepare for the new arrangements.
- (e) Implementation date
The implementation date for this proposal, if agreed, would be September 2010.

2.34 A broad timeline for a possible school reorganisation in Highworth, as described above, is set out below:

Up to April/May 2009	Informal discussions held
May 2009	Initial report to Cabinet
June-September 2009	If agreed, pre-statutory consultation: consultation meetings with staff, Unions, Governors and parents
September/October 2009	Further report to Cabinet and ongoing consultation with staff and Unions
October/November 2009	If agreed, statutory consultation
December 2009/January 2010	Decision made by Cabinet Panel. In addition, formal consultation undertaken with staff and Unions regarding effects on individuals
September 2010	If agreed, implementation

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- 2.35 It should be noted that the above timeline would mean that the final decision could be made *after* the closing date for parents submitting applications for primary places. This is not ideal but may be unavoidable if September 2010 is the agreed implementation date. The alternative is to set an implementation date of September 2011 but this could create uncertainty over a much longer period.

Alternative Options

- A number of alternative options have been considered in detail to address the growing number of surplus primary places in the Highworth area. These include:

1) Reduce the size of Northview Primary School from 1FE to ½ FE

This option would enable Northview Primary School to remain open on its present site and would also remove ½ FE from the Highworth area, as proposed. Although 15 is a low admission number for any school, there are examples of schools in Swindon and elsewhere with admission numbers around or below this level. The earliest date that such a change could be introduced would be September 2011 (see Legal Implications). However, in the cases of other schools with low admission numbers, they are effectively “guaranteed” a sufficient number of pupils that would enable them to remain viable (village schools). This could not be said of Northview Primary School. As shown in **Appendix 1**, by 2013 there may be a demand for only 2.7FE in the Highworth area, with currently 4FE available. There is, therefore, a significant risk with this option that if parents do not choose Northview Primary School (as is largely currently the case) it could very quickly become unviable.

2) Amalgamate Westrop and Northview Primary Schools into a single, 1½ FE primary school based on the two existing sites

This option would allow all of the existing sites to continue to function and, therefore, would avoid the need for a school closure. It would also enable a single Head Teacher and Governing Body to operate both sites as a single, all-through primary school and allow ½ FE to be removed. However, with the continuing decline of primary pupil numbers in the Highworth area, it can be questioned whether there would be a need for a school on two sites, as proposed under this option. This option would also produce a split-site school and would not necessarily be easy to manage on a permanent basis.

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- 3) Federate Westrop and Northview Primary Schools on the two existing sites and reduce the overall admission number in order to remove ½ FE

This option would involve both Schools remaining legally separate on their existing sites but there would be a federation arrangement, with a single Head Teacher and a single Governing Body. This would avoid the need for a school closure or major amalgamation at this stage. This arrangement would need to be initiated by the Governing Bodies of the two Schools. However, if the federation were unsuccessful, it may well then be necessary to instigate a reorganisation of schools in the Highworth area. The other disadvantages identified in the previous option would also apply.

- 4) Reduce the size of Eastrop Infant and Southfield Junior Schools by ½ FE each, so that both Schools became 1½ FE schools

This option would mean that there was no need for a school reorganisation in the Highworth area. Were pupil numbers to increase in the longer-term, both Schools would have the capacity to increase their admission numbers. This approach would also enable all the existing schools in the Highworth area to continue to function on their current sites. However, the earliest date that such a change could be introduced would be September 2011 (see Legal Implications). Both Eastrop Infant and Southfield Junior Schools are strongly opposed to reducing their admission numbers and could appeal to the Schools Adjudicator. Although both Schools are forecast to have substantial surplus capacity by 2013, the predicted levels are lower than for any of the other schools in the Highworth area. Connected to this, the current levels of surplus capacity in the two Schools as at November 2009 are significantly below the surplus capacity in Northview Primary School (see **Appendix 1**). A major building scheme has recently been carried out at Southfield Junior School to replace mobile accommodation, related to Promise 17. To now reduce the admission number for the School would seem to run contrary to the investment that has taken place on this site.

- 5) Amalgamate Eastrop Infant and Southfield Junior Schools into a 1½ FE

The issues raised in Option 4 above would be similar for this option. However, with this option there would be a requirement for a school reorganisation. Although such a reorganisation would have the effect of reducing the number of places in the area, it should be noted that the level of surplus capacity is lower in Eastrop Infant and Southfield Junior Schools than other schools in the area and both Governing Bodies would be strongly opposed to such a proposal. Such an amalgamation would potentially hit only one of the four triggers required under the Council's

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policy, ie, surplus places in the longer-term. There is a requirement that at least two triggers must be hit. (See other issues raised in Option 4 above.)

- In relation to the proposal set out in this report **to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School**, the key issues include:
 - It would remove ½ FE, as required for the foreseeable future.
 - The forecast number of pupils for Northview Primary School for Reception in September 2009 is currently very low. There has been only one offer made of a place for September 2009.
 - The level of surplus capacity in Northview Primary School was 43% as at November 2008 and was last forecast to increase to 64% by 2013.
 - There is expected to be a need for some additional accommodation on the Westrop Primary School as an interim measure to enable it to expand to 1½ FE.
 - Were pupil numbers to continue to decline, there remains scope for Westrop Primary School to revert to 1FE.
 - There would be scope to use the existing Northview building for another community purpose or potentially to dispose of it for a capital receipt, which could then be reinvested in schools in the Highworth area.
 - If Westrop Primary School were expanded, this would reduce the level of disruption at least to that School as a result of the school reorganisation.
 - There is general support to date from Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors in the area for this proposal, including Westrop Primary School.

However, these additional issues also need to be taken into account:

- Closing a school on a site is normally seen as a “last resort” in terms of impact on the pupils, staff and local community.
- As referred to in the body of the report, the Decision Makers’ Guidance from the DCSF has a presumption against the closure of rural schools, of which Northview Primary School would be one.

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- Closure of the Northview Primary School site would mean that parents and pupils in that area would need to travel further to their school, which would mean greater walking distances and/or greater use of the car. The key travel and traffic implications are set out in paragraph 3.32 above and in **Appendix 3**, including and in particular the need to cross the A361.

If the site were disposed of and pupil numbers increased in the area in the long-term, a new site would potentially have to be identified for a new school. However, all the indications in the long-term forecasts are that pupil numbers will continue to decline and, in addition, there would remain scope to absorb at least an additional ½ FE (see above section on Potential Future Housing Developments).

Risk Management*Financial and Procurement Implications*

- The costs of publishing statutory proposals are contained within the existing Access and Provision budget.
- The falling roll at Northview Primary School has direct financial implications for the School as a large proportion of a school's funding is based on the number of pupils on roll. If the School remained open and numbers continued to fall, then a budget shortfall would be likely to lead to staff redundancies in the future. There is a significant risk that Northview will experience financial difficulties over the next 12 months and beyond, although it is not, at present, possible to quantify the size of any deficit. If there were a deficit, this would need to be funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is under considerable pressure. If Northview Primary School closed and pupils transferred to Westrop Primary School, then the pupil-led funding would follow the pupils to their new school. However, this would depend on parental preference and the availability of places at other schools. There would be financial implications for the DSG budget if there were any redundancies and it is likely that there would need to be additional funding from the DSG in Westrop Primary School. The savings that would be likely to materialise from closing Northview School would be NNDR of around £10k and flat rate savings of around £60k.
- For schools that have low admission numbers, the current funding formula "guarantees" a minimum number of pupils to enable them to remain viable (village schools). There are three thresholds for small schools protection based on a maximum number of pupils needed to keep the school viable. These thresholds are: less than 60 pupils, less than 91 pupils and less than 121 pupils. The top-up is then calculated on the difference between the school's actual pupil numbers and the total number relating to the relevant threshold amount. Currently, within the

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primary sector, only 4 schools receive this allocation, Northview being one, although they only receive a small amount. Due to the level of funding the Local Authority receives from the DCSF, it is important that the Local Authority targets resources effectively and would only recommend using the small schools protection if alternative options were not viable, as this puts additional pressure on the DSG. If Northview continues to experience further reductions in pupil numbers, then the small schools protection would increase. The maximum entitlement a school would receive through the small schools allowance is £63k. However, this will vary depending on the number of pupils in the school.

- In general, long-term savings from school reorganisation accrue to the Schools Budget. When a school is closed, there is always a risk of redundancies, although everything is done to avoid this happening (see Staffing Implications below). The Schools Forum has accepted the principle that, where there are proven savings against schools' block budgets, it is not unreasonable for them to accept any such redundancy costs associated with a school reorganisation. This is in line with DCSF guidance.
- In terms of the capital funding position, there is currently no additional finance available within the Council's Capital Programme in relation to any school reorganisation within Highworth. There is, however, a major scheme being undertaken at present at Westrop Primary School, involving the replacement of mobile accommodation, provision of a new Children's Centre and a relocated Pre-School Playgroup. A feasibility study would need to be carried out at Westrop Primary School to establish the amount of space available/required and whether this is sufficient within the short-term, on the basis that forecast numbers are expected to decline over the coming years. However, there is currently an expectation that there will be a need for temporary classrooms on the Westrop Primary School site, as an interim measure until pupil numbers decline further. If a double mobile classroom were located on the Westrop Primary School site for two years, then the costs associated with leasing this unit would amount to an estimated £120k over this period. This figure includes set up and removal costs, and is better value for money when compared to the cost of purchase of £200k. It is expected that the cost would be funded from the Primary Capital Programme. However, alternative options are being explored to reduce or eliminate any cost implications. In addition, were this option to proceed, a decision would need to be taken by Cabinet on the longer-term future of the Northview Primary School site.
- In relation to any travel/transport financial implications, the cost of a signalised pedestrian crossing on Lechlade Road, such as that installed on Shaw Road in 2006 for Shaw Ridge School, is estimated to be upwards of £50K, depending on specific site requirements. Funding for such a scheme would have to be in addition to the existing programme of crossing requests, since there is generally only sufficient Highways funding each year for one signalised crossing. If a crossing were provided as part of the proposal, then it would need to be met from a budget source such as the Local Transport Plan budget. As there are presently no

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proposals in the Local Transport Plan budget to provide a crossing at this location, then it will be necessary to prioritise this crossing above other crossings that are planned.

- In relation to condition issues with Northview Primary School and Westrop Primary School, both have outstanding priority works. The schools were last surveyed for condition work in 2005 and new surveys are due to start this year. Work is prioritised according to the scale below, where 1 is a high priority, and 2, 3 and 4 are lower priority. The total amount of the works at each school as a result of the survey is shown in the table below:

Northview Primary School

Element	1 (£000's)	2 (£000's)	3 (£000's)	4 (£000's)
Roofs	0	0	0	0
Floor and Stairs	0	0	0.244	0
Ceilings	0.023	0	1.349	0
External walls windows and doors	0	0	0	0
Internal walls and doors	0	0	0.080	0
Mechanical Services	0	0	50.539	138.542
Electrical Services	0	0	77.606	48.794
Redecorations	0	0	0	0.120
External areas	0	0	0	0
Total	0.023	0	129.818	317.727

Westrop Primary School

Element	1 (£000's)	2 (£000's)	3 (£000's)	4 (£000's)
Roofs	0	0	45.523	0
Floor and Stairs	6	0	0	1.666
Ceilings	0	.120	0.513	0
External walls windows and doors	4.5	0	0	0
Internal walls and doors	0	0	0.5	0
Mechanical Services	0	0	161.850	0
Electrical Services	0	0	81.281	2
Redecorations	0	0.275	6.340	10.982
External areas	0	0.7	0	0
Total	10.5	1.095	296.007	14.690

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- Before deciding to publish proposals to close or extend a school the Local Authority is required by Statute to carry out a pre-statutory consultation. If the Local Authority then decides to publish proposals there is then a six-week period during which any person can make written representations to the Local Authority. The Cabinet Panel then decides on the proposals.
- The following bodies may appeal to the Adjudicator within one month of a Cabinet Panel decision to close a school:
 - The Local Church of England Diocese
 - The Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese
 - The Governing Body or Trustees of a Foundation, Trust or Voluntary school that is proposed for closure

Where the Cabinet decision is to expand a school, the same bodies as above have a right of appeal to the Adjudicator but there is also a right of appeal by the Governing Body of the Community school that is proposed for expansion.

In relation to options to reduce a school's admission number, the earliest date when such a change could be introduced would be September 2011. The reason for this is that admission arrangements are set in accordance with the DCSF Code of Practice that lays down an annual statutory timetable.

Staffing Implications

In relation to the staffing implications of this proposal, these would essentially be as follows:

- Westrop Primary School Head Teacher would be confirmed as Head Teacher of expanded school.
- Staff at Westrop Primary School should be unaffected.
- Northview Primary School Head Teacher and staff are potentially at risk of redundancy. However, the Authority would work very closely with Westrop Primary School Governing Body to ringfence any new vacancies within the expanding school and open up to displaced staff.
- The Authority would do everything possible to seek to redeploy other staff within other Swindon schools or the Council - there is a financial incentive for schools to redeploy redundant staff and the Authority would develop an employee assistance programme.

School Places in Highworth**CABINET****20 May 2009***Equality Implications*

- The majority of pupils at both Northview and Westrop Primary Schools are of White British origin and, at 90.7% and 91.5%, the numbers are higher than the Swindon average.
- Northview Primary School has 13.6% eligibility for free school meals, which is slightly higher than the Swindon average of 13.3%, whereas Westrop Primary School has a lower figure of 8.7%.
- The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores calculated, using individual pupil postcode data taken from the 2009 school census, show both Schools are below average for deprivation. Northview and Westrop Primary Schools are ranked in 42nd and 43rd (out of 60) places respectively across Swindon schools.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

The recommendations are in line with Swindon 2010 Promise 20.

Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports. Other relevant officers have also been consulted.
- The Ward Councillors for Highworth
- Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors of all the Highworth schools have been consulted about this proposal.
- Discussions with Highworth Town Council and other discussions and meetings, as set out in paragraphs 2.5 – 2.8 of the report
- As indicated in this report, it is planned to undertake an extensive consultation exercise on the proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary Schools.

Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Pupil Numbers
- Appendix 2 – Map
- Appendix 3 – Travel Implications

Key Decision / Decision in Forward Plan

This is a key decision for Cabinet and has been included in the Cabinet Forward Plan for April 2009.

School Places in Highworth

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Appendix 1

Highworth Area Excluding St Andrews - Projection based on November 08 NOR & application data for September 09

SCHOOL	NOR Jan 2007	Net capacity 2008	Planned Admission Number 2009/10	NOR Jan 2008	Surplus capacity Jan 2008	Nov 08 NOR	Surplus capacity Nov 08	Est. NOR Sep 09	Projected surplus capacity Sep 09	Est. NOR Sep 10	Projected surplus capacity Sep 10	Est. NOR Sep 11	Projected surplus capacity Sep 11	Est. NOR Sep 12	Projected surplus capacity Sep 12	Diff in roll 2008- 2013	Projected Capacity 2013	Projected surplus capacity 2013
Highworth area																		
Eastrop Infant	159	164	60	151	7.9%	146	11.0%	138	15.9%	154	6.1%	151	7.9%	143	12.8%	-8	164	13%
Northview Primary	173	210	30	151	28.1%	119	43.3%	106	49.5%	97	53.8%	85	59.5%	77	63.3%	-74	210	63%
Southfield Junior	229	240	60	229	4.6%	222	7.5%	224	6.7%	210	12.5%	197	17.9%	195	18.8%	-34	240	19%
Westrop Primary	199	198	30	189	4.5%	183	7.6%	169	14.6%	161	18.7%	142	28.3%	145	26.8%	-44	198	27%
Total	760	812		720	11.3%	670	17.5%	637	21.6%	622	23.4%	575	29.2%	560	31.0%	-160	812	31%

Forms of Entry

3.6

4

3.4

3.2

3.0

3.0

2.7

2.7

1 FE = 210

Highworth Area exc. St Andrews	Reception				
PCT Data	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Preschool children in area	85	81	96	77	82
Forms of entry	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.6	2.7

Average
84
2.8

Highworth Area exc. St Andrews	Reception				
PCT Data Trend Forecast	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Preschool children in area	77	75	73	71	69
Forms of entry	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3

NB The forecasts for September 2009 and beyond shown in this Appendix were compiled in November 2008.

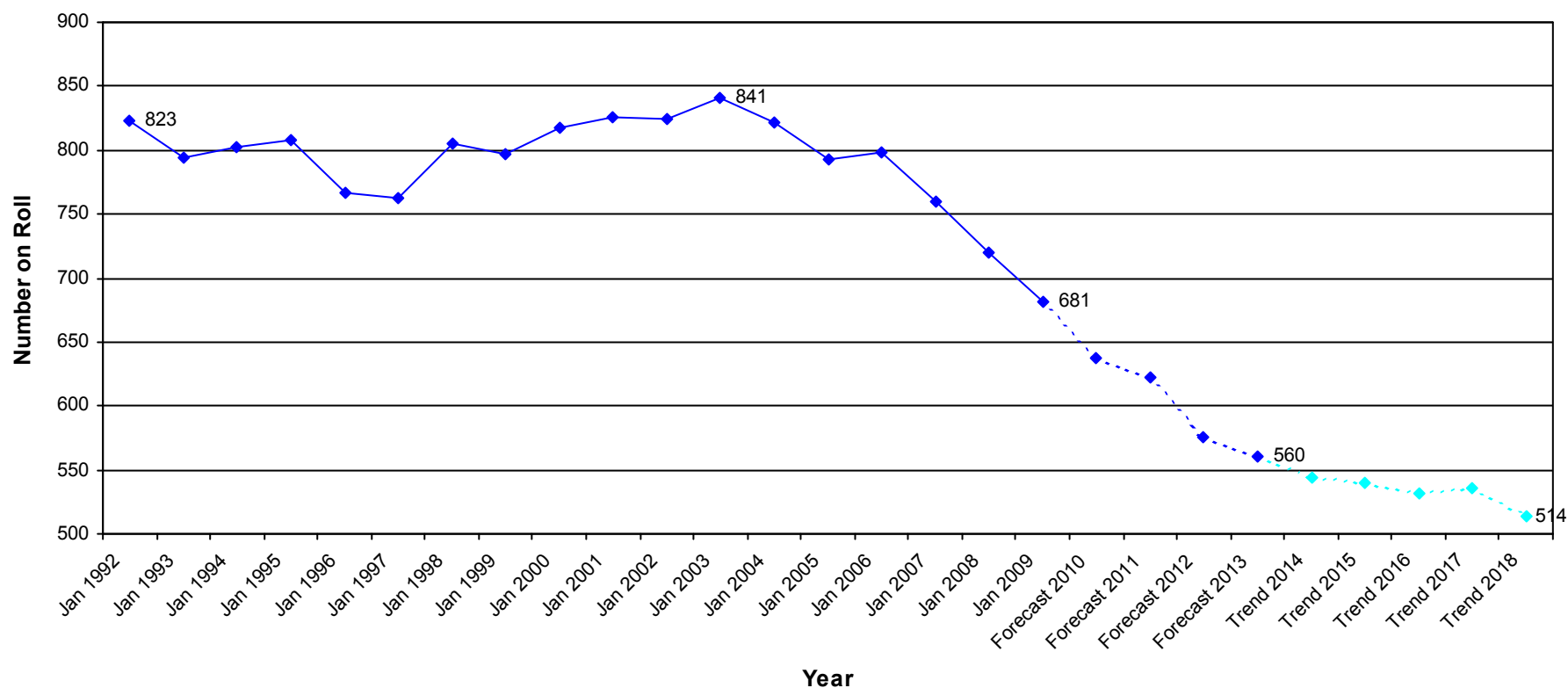
Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Ian Bickerton, Director of Access & Provision, on 01793 465724 or Email ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

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Highworth Area Number on Roll from January 1992 to January 2009
Forecast and Trends to January 2018



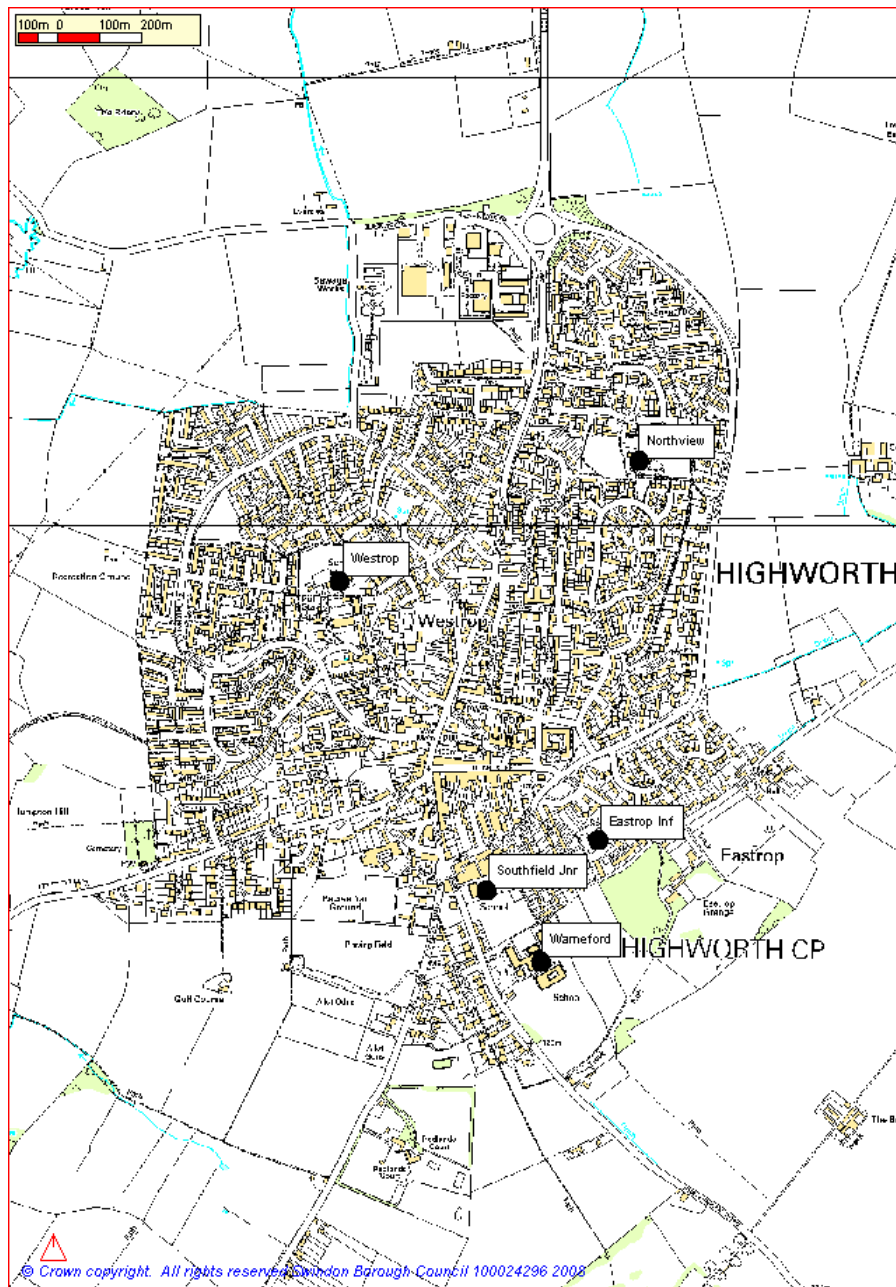
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School Places in Highworth

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20 May 2009

Appendix 2



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School Places in Highworth

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Appendix 3

Highworth - School Places – Travel & Traffic Implications - Travel Plan Status

Westrop (2005 and updated 2008), Southfield (2006) and Eastrop (2007) all have approved travel plans. Northview began to develop a plan last year, but the member of staff involved has moved on. Warneford have not engaged with the travel plan process.

Current modes of travel

Mode of travel data is supplied to the January School Census by all schools with travel plans, and some others. Since this data is linked to pupil postcodes we can produce plot maps showing the pattern of pupil locations and modes of travel.

School Census – Mode of Travel to School

School		Walk	Cycle	Car share	Car/Van	Public Bus	School Bus	Bus unknown	Taxi	Total
Eastrop	2008	108(71.5%)		9 (6%)	30 (19.9%)		4 (2.6%)			151
	2009	72 (67.9%)		3 (2.8%)	29 (27.4%)		2 (1.9%)			106
Northview	2008	78 (51.7%)		43 (28.5%)	30 (19.9%)					151
	2009	55 (50.5%)			53 (48.6%)				1 (0.9%)	109
Southfield	2008	131 (57.2%)		12 (5.2%)	74 (32.3%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.9%)	9 (3.9%)		229
	2009	131 (58%)		10 (4.4%)	76 (33.6%)	1 (0.4%)	7 (3.1%)	1 (0.4%)		226
Westrop	2008	168 (88.9%)			21 (11.1%)					189
	2009	140 (89.2%)			17 (10.8%)					157

Current travel issues

Police have recently received a number of complaints from local residents in the roads behind Southfield and Eastrop schools concerning inconsiderate parking by parents. The roads are very narrow and quickly become congested at morning and afternoon peaks. There are also issues with parents stopping on Shrivenham Road near the front of Southfield to drop off children, although the majority of these are Warneford pupils. Parents for all three schools are encouraged to park in the Brewery Street or Co-op car parks and walk the short distance to school.

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All primary/junior schools are offered cycle training for Year 6 children. Westrop have a secure cycle shelter that was funded from the LTP budget in 2004. Despite this, currently very few children ever cycle to school in Highworth, and none are recorded on the census as cycling regularly. This is primarily because there is a lack of safe cycling routes suitable for primary-aged children, particularly through the central parts of the town, although quieter roads in the Westrop and Northview areas could be used by some.

Westrop and Southfield and to some extent Northview, have fairly restricted on-site parking for staff and visitors, although there is a small public car park behind the shops at Westrop.

Implications of school reorganisation.

At present around half the current Northview pupils walk to school and the remainder travel by car. For families living in the area around Northview school both Westrop and Southfield/Eastrop are roughly within the 800m walking threshold. It has been shown nationally that primary-aged pupils living beyond this distance from school are more likely to travel by car.

However, the Lechlade Road (A361) is a significant barrier for pedestrians or cyclists to Westrop School. The road has limited crossing facilities – a light-controlled pedestrian crossing at the town centre end, and two pedestrian refuges further north. (January 2009 survey data shows traffic flows of approximately 11,000 vehicles per day, with average speed 29.36mph (85 percentile 34.25mph). There have been six reported injury accidents on this stretch of road in the two years to the end of 2008, although only one involved a pedestrian.)

Travel to Eastrop or Southfield on foot would mean negotiating the central area of the town, and in particular crossing Brewery Street, which has already been raised by the local schools as a safety concern. There are plans to improve crossing facilities here under Section 106 funding.

It is likely that many former Northview families will choose to drive to school, rather than walk if they have the choice, given the physical barriers and greater distances involved. This could lead to significant congestion issues at Westrop or Eastrop/Southfield given the already restricted parking facilities and the planned development of the Children's Centre at Westrop.

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Measures will need to be put in place to encourage families to walk or cycle. It may be possible to improve the crossing facilities on Lechlade Road, if this is considered appropriate and funding is identified. As with the Salt Way/Shaw Ridge transfer, suitable safe walking and cycling routes could be identified and mapped, with information provided to Northview families as early as possible. Through work with the whole school community, the Westrop School Travel Plan should be reviewed and updated to reflect the changes to the school population and travel patterns.

Jane Deeley
School Travel Advisor
Casualty & Congestion Reduction
Planning & Transport Directorate
01793 466335
jdeeley@swindon.gov.uk