

Agenda Item 5

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Group Director, Children

Parish / Wards Affected: Highworth

Purpose

To report to Cabinet on the results of the "pre-consultation" consultation carried out on the proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School in order to address the increasing number of Primary school surplus places in the Highworth area

Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to

- (1) consider the results of the "pre-statutory" consultation, which was carried out with parents, Governors, staff and the wider local community on the proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School from September 2010, as set out in the body of the report and in **Appendices 6 and 7**, together with officers' responses set out in **Appendix 9** and other key issues highlighted;
- (2) authorise the Group Director, Children, to undertake "statutory" consultation on this proposal, with the results of the consultation to be reported to a meeting of the Cabinet Panel, which will be held in late 2009 or early 2010.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 There are an increasing number of surplus primary school places in the Highworth area and this trend is forecast to continue in the long-term. The policy of the Council, as set out in the School Organisation Plan and Primary Capital Strategy, is that schools with 25% or more surplus places will be examined, with a view to possible action being taken to address the surplus. At present, Northview Primary School has 68% surplus places and it is currently forecast that by September 2013 there will be 32 pupils in the School, ie, the school will be 85% empty. Indeed, all the Primary schools in Highworth are forecast to have surplus capacity over the coming years.
- 1.2 A special meeting of Cabinet was held in May 2009 at which different options for addressing surplus places in the Highworth area were considered. It was agreed at that meeting that "pre-statutory" consultation should be carried out 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.

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

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- 1.3 Consultation was undertaken from early July to late September as part of the "pre-statutory" consultation, including with the wider local community, and the results are set out later in this report. It is fully recognised that this is a very uncertain and difficult time, particularly for everyone connected with Northview Primary School, including pupils, parents and staff. It should also be re-emphasised that this report is about surplus school places and not about standards or pupil attainment.
- 1.4 Cabinet is now asked to consider the results of this consultation and decide whether or not they wish to proceed to the "statutory" consultation stage. If Cabinet decided that they wished to take this forward, then, following the "statutory" consultation process, which involves the publication of public notices for a six-week period, the final decision on whether or not to agree this proposal would be taken by a Panel of Cabinet. This is likely to meet in December 2009 or, more likely, January 2010.
- 1.5 Cabinet's attention is particularly drawn to:
- **Appendices 6 and 7** that set out the results of the consultation;
 - **Appendix 9** that sets out officers' responses to key issues raised;
 - the highway/road safety issues raised in paragraph 3.7(b) of the report;
 - the financial/value for money assessment in **Appendix 8**;
 - the possible use of the Northview Primary School site for an interim period, were the proposal to proceed (see paragraph 3.7(e)).
- 1.6 On the other hand, Cabinet could decide, in the light of the results of the "pre-statutory" consultation carried out, that they did not want to take forward the proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School. However, Cabinet will need to have in place an alternative longer-term strategy for addressing the increasing number of surplus places in the Highworth area.

2. Detail

Background

- 2.1 As reported to the meeting of Cabinet in May 2009, 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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- 2.2 However, this is projected to increase to 29% in Highworth by 2013. Overall, the four schools in Highworth have the capacity to offer 812 school places. The demand for these places is expected to decrease to 579 by 2013, leaving 233 places uncoupled by that date. The trend analysis indicates that pupil numbers will continue to decline beyond 2013, as shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 As indicated in this Appendix, a significant proportion of this surplus is currently located in one of the primary schools, Northview.
- 2.4 The level of surplus capacity in Northview Primary School is currently 68% and is forecast to increase to 85% by 2013, as indicated in **Appendix 1**. For September 2009 Reception admissions, there were three pupils entering the School, although there are thirty places available in Reception. At present, there are 68 pupils in Northview Primary School, with 210 places available.
- 2.5 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 therefore been excluded from the data shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 A map of the Highworth area is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Cabinet Meeting – May 2009

- 2.7 A special meeting of Cabinet was held on 20 May 2009, which considered a proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School by up to ¼ FE, if required, from September 2010, together with a number of alternative options. These **Alternative Options** are set out later in this report, as well as further information on the proposal for Northview and Westrop Primary Schools.
- 2.8 Following views put forward at the open session preceding Cabinet by parents and members of the public and discussion around the other options, Cabinet decided that a "pre-statutory" consultation should be carried out with the Schools and consultation with the wider community in Highworth and for the results to be reported to this meeting.
- 2.9 Cabinet also considered at that meeting a number of key issues, including:
- the Local Authority's (LA) School Places Strategy;
 - potential future housing developments;
 - designated "rural" schools;
 - travel and traffic implications;
 - financial and legal implications.

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These and other key issues related to this proposal are set out both in **Appendix 3** attached (as reported to May Cabinet) and elsewhere in this report.

Consultation Process

- 3.1 Following the May Cabinet meeting, in late June/early July, the consultation document attached as **Appendix 4** was sent to the Westrop and Northview Primary School communities and other key stakeholders. As indicated in this document, the consultation period ran from 3 July to 30 September 2009.
- 3.2 Consultation meetings were held in early July with the Westrop and Northview Primary School communities, with separate meetings held for parents, Governors and staff.
- 3.3 In early/mid-September, drop-in sessions were held over two days for the wider community of Highworth in order to provide those not within the immediate school communities with the opportunity to find out more about the proposal and to put forward views and comments. (Copy of letter sent to local Highworth residents attached as **Appendix 5**.)

Results of Consultation

- 3.4 The results of the consultation are set out in the following Appendices:
 - **Appendix 6** – results of feedback forms received from the Northview and Westrop Primary School communities and summary of the key issues raised and comments made at the Northview and Westrop Primary School consultation meetings and the drop-in sessions for the wider local community
 - **Appendix 7** – copies of letters received and a document from Northview Action Group
- 3.5 The individual feedback forms returned and the more detailed notes of the consultation meetings, together with other responses, including the petition presented earlier in the year, have been placed in a folder in the Members' Room and will also be available at the meeting.
- 3.6 In summary, the results of the consultation carried out have highlighted the following:

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- The Northview Primary School parents, Governors and staff, and local community, who responded in writing or attended consultation meetings were overwhelmingly against the proposed closure of the School and the expansion of Westrop Primary School. Some of the key points raised included the following:
 - The reason for the particular decline in pupil numbers at the School was due to the previous leadership.
 - With new leadership, the School would recover and pupil numbers increase.
 - Standards and pupil attainment are good, despite the difficulties the School had faced.
 - The case for closure did not clearly demonstrate value for money.
 - Concerns about travelling to Westrop Primary School and, in particular, crossing the A361
 - Doubts about the accuracy of pupil number forecasts
 - The future use of the building and site were the School to be closed
 - At Westrop Primary School there was more of a mixed picture. The majority of those who responded to the consultation in writing were opposed to the expansion, although there was a relatively low response rate, ie, 7% of parents. However, the Governing Body has written to the LA supporting the expansion (see Appendix 7) but on the basis that there are sufficient financial resources and accommodation available.

Some of the key points raised in the consultation included the following:

- Concern that there are sufficient financial resources available at the outset to enable there to be appropriate staffing levels
- Linked to this, concerns about larger class sizes at Key Stage 2 and mixed-aged classes
- Whether there would be sufficient space in the Westrop Primary School building for the additional pupils from September 2010

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- The effect on parking and traffic around the Westrop Primary School site, in particular, in the adjoining public car park
 - A suggestion that if the reorganisation proceeded, the Northview site could operate as part of a split-site arrangement for a period of time (see 3.7(a)(ii) below).
 - The Head Teachers in the Highworth Cluster, excluding Northview Primary School, have written to the LA supporting the proposed closure of Northview Primary School and expansion of Westrop Primary School (see **Appendix 7**). Like the Governing Body of Westrop Primary School, this is on the basis of sufficient financial resources being available at the outset to the expanded School.
 - Unison has written to the LA opposing the proposal (see **Appendix 7**).
 - The views of the Northview Action Group, opposing the proposal, are set out in a document in **Appendix 7**.
 - The Community consultation, particularly carried out during the drop-in sessions in September, highlighted a number of points, including:
 - the future use of the Northview Primary School building and site were the School to be closed, including concerns that it could be redeveloped for housing
 - that the Northview Primary School building and site should be developed as a community asset – a post-16 facility was one example provided
 - a view that pupil numbers in Highworth could increase in the future
 - concerns about increased traffic and parking problems around the Westrop Primary School site
 - concerns whether the Westrop Primary School building had the capacity to absorb additional pupils.

Responses to key points raised in the consultation are attached as **Appendix 9**.

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Key Issues

- 3.7 The key issues arising from this proposal and the consultation accompanying it, therefore, include the following:

(a) *Results of Consultation*

These are set out in brief earlier in the report and also in **Appendices 6 and 7**. The report also summarises above some of the main points raised during the consultation process. Responses from officers to key points raised are set out in **Appendix 9**.

(b) *Travel and Traffic Implications*

Appendix 3 includes the extract on this issue in the report made to the May meeting of Cabinet. The following is a summary of the main issues, including those identified during the consultation process:

- Currently around 50% of Northview Primary School pupils walk to school, with the remainder travelling by car. There is significantly higher car use by families living within 800m of the School (30% compared to 15% Swindon average).
- Given this evidence and the increased distance involved for most families, it is likely that many parents, particularly those going on to work, will continue to choose to drive to any alternative school.
- The Lechlade road (A381) is a significant barrier for pedestrians or cyclists from Haresfield travelling to Westrop Primary School.
- For families living to the North of the area, the route to school involves a steep gradient, which would especially impact on those with young children.
- The public car park outside the Westrop Primary School site is used by visitors to the Health Centre, Community Centre and shops, as well as by parents dropping off and collecting children at the School and Children's Centre. There are already congestion problems at peak school times.

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- Increased traffic on St Michael's Avenue and Grove Hill will affect the safety of families walking or cycling to Westrop Primary School and increase congestion at the junction with the A361.

Measures can be put in place to improve safety on key routes and to encourage families to walk, cycle or car-share:

- Crossing facilities on Lechlade Road could be upgraded. However, a controlled pedestrian crossing facility installed near Crane Furlong could impact on peak traffic flows on this route. The extent of this impact has not been quantified to date. There is a risk that traffic may "rat-run" via Roundhills Mead if congestion builds up, leading to increased traffic in the Brewery Street area of the town. The estimated cost of a new puffin crossing is £95,000 (this is inclusive of contingencies, associated design, supervision fees and carrying out any appropriate advance traffic modelling works).
- Suitable walking routes can be identified and publicised through the Schools.
- A "walking bus" scheme could be set up, if there is sufficient demand and staff/volunteers found to run it. The estimated cost of providing staff for a walking bus between Northview and Westrop is £10,000 per year, to allow for two retained staff at the "head" and "tail" of the walking bus. This funding may be needed for two years until a volunteer-run walking bus becomes sustainable from an operational perspective. If numbers of children using the walking bus rise above recommended adult:child ratios, then additional adults will be required.
- An informal car-share network could be set up through the School, particularly for those families travelling to both Primary and Secondary schools.
- A Traffic Regulation Order could be introduced to prohibit parking at certain locations near Westrop Primary School, for which the estimated cost is £8,000.
- Alternative parking for a "Park & Stride" arrangement could be identified and promoted.

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- Junction improvements could be made at St Michaels Avenue and Lechlade Road, for example, a possible new mini-roundabout at an estimated cost of £16,000.
 - Other initiatives and campaigns can be organised through the School's Travel Plan.
 - If the Northview Primary School site were used as a split-site as part of an expanded Westrop Primary School (see below) for maybe two years, there would be implications for travel and traffic. However, it is not possible to quantify these until exact details are known. It is likely that some families will have children at both sites and this may encourage car use, as parents will want to get to both Schools at the start and end of the day. However, if the Northview Primary School site were used for the older, Key Stage 2 children, parents may be willing to allow them to travel independently if they live nearby.

(c) *Financial and Value for Money Analysis*

The financial and value for money information on this proposal is set out in **Appendix 3**, in the section later in this report on "Financial and Procurement Implications" and particularly in **Appendix 8, "Financial & Value for Money Assessment"**. The financial appraisals in **Appendix 8** have been based on four options:

- (1) Northview Primary School remains open.
- (2) Northview Primary School closes but the building remains in use and becomes a split-site with Westrop Primary School for an assumed period of two years.
- (3) Northview Primary School is closed and the pupils attend Westrop Primary School, with extra space provided by renting a mobile classroom.
- (4) Northview Primary School is closed and the pupils attend Westrop Primary School, with the extra space provided by purchasing a mobile classroom.

It should also be noted that the average funding per Primary-aged pupil in Swindon is £2,879. As indicated in **Appendix 8**, the funding per pupil at Northview Primary School is currently £3,153 but is projected to be £6,519 by 2014/15.

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Other key points are as follows:

- Option 1 (Northview Primary School remaining open) projects a very significant accumulating budget deficit.
- Option 2 (using the Northview Primary School site as a split-site, if Northview closes) and Option 3 (renting a mobile classroom at Westrop Primary School, if Northview closes) project the most significant savings over the coming years, compared to Option 4 (the purchase of a mobile for the Westrop Primary School site, if Northview closes).
- All possible costs identified so far have been taken into account in Appendix 8, including road safety measures. If not all of these costs materialise, then the savings could be greater.

(d) *Designated "Rural" Schools*

As reported to May 2008 Cabinet (see Appendix 3), all the Primary schools in Highworth, including Northview and Westrop, are designated as "rural" schools by the Department of Children, Schools & Families (DCSF). The DCSF clarifies schools as "urban" or "rural" depending on whether the majority of the population falls inside a settlement of 10,000 or more. When considering a proposed school closure, the LA must, therefore, consider the following issues:

Issue	Comments
The likely effect of the discontinuance of the School on the local community	The School and the wider local communities have been consulted. The consultation papers and responses/results are referred to above and also in Appendices 4, 5, 6 and 7. This is also referred to below.
The availability and likely cost to the LA of transport to other schools	Were Northview Primary School to be closed, it is not expected that there would be any school transport costs, as alternative Primary schools would be available locally.

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Issue	Comments
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	The issue is referred to above and as reported to the May 2008 Cabinet meeting in Appendix 3/Annex 1 attached.
Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the School	Alternatives were considered at the May 2009 Cabinet meeting and are set out under Alternative Options later in this report.

The alternative Primary school provision within Highworth is at schools within one mile of Northview Primary School. In terms of extended services, although Northview Primary School does offer a varied number of after-school activities, Westrop Primary School offers a broader range of extended services for pupils, families and the community. If the proposal for the closure of Northview Primary School and the expansion of Westrop Primary School by 0.5FE (up to 105 places) in the area is approved, it is expected that, in that sense, Westrop Primary School's expansion would have a positive impact on the local community, enhancing in the area an expanded Primary education option with the expectation that it would provide the full extended schools core offer, in conjunction with the newly opened Children's Centre and Pre-school on the site. In addition, were Northview Primary School to be closed, Cabinet may decide that the building/site should be available for an alternative use that would benefit the community.

If it is decided that this proposal is taken to the next, statutory stage of consultation, then all the above issues will need to be considered carefully at the subsequent meeting of the Cabinet Panel, when a final decision would be taken.

(e) *Possible Future Use of Northview Primary School Site*

Two issues are particularly relevant:

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(i) Longer-term use of site

Were it to be decided that Northview Primary School should close, then Cabinet would need to decide on the long-term future of the site. It has been indicated that the site should be used for the long-term benefit of the Highworth community. A suggestion that has been made on a number of occasions during the consultation is that the site could be used as a post-16 facility. However, it is not clear at this stage whether or not this is viable.

(ii) Short-term use of site

As mentioned above, it was discussed during the consultation that the site could be used in the short-term (eg, for two or three years) as part of a "split-site" school were Northview Primary School to be closed and Westrop Primary School to be expanded, as proposed. In other words, Westrop Primary School could operate from September 2010 initially on two sites – the main Westrop site and the existing Northview Primary School site for older Year groups (eg, Years 5 and 6). During this time, it is forecast the pupil numbers will continue to fall and it is likely that, in due course, Westrop Primary School would revert to one form of entry.

The main advantages and disadvantages of this suggestion are set out below:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could enable Years 5 and 6 pupils in September 2010 at Northview to remain on the same site, thus avoiding two moves – one to Westrop and a second soon after to Secondary school, ie, helping to minimise disruption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would mean that the Westrop Leadership Team would need to manage two sites approximately ½ mile apart for a period of time. This could create complications in terms of school organisation and access to facilities by all pupils.

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Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would mean that a mobile classroom would not need to be provided on the Westrop site and potentially offer more flexibility of accommodation available at Westrop. • Would, therefore, avoid the need to identify funding for a new mobile (although there would, of course, be running costs of the Northview site for a period of time). • Would avoid the need for additional travelling for some pupils currently based on the Northview site. • Would help to ease a potential increase in traffic congestion around the Westrop site, which is a concern raised by some local residents. • School would receive a split-site allowance for the relevant period (although this would be extra short-term cost to the DSG). (See Appendix 8.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As indicated, there would be running costs and a split-site allowance, which would need to be covered by the DSG. Appendix 8 sets out the projected financial implications of this and other options. • There would be some parents who would have Primary-aged children on two sites, with the complications this could cause for travelling, etc.

Next Steps

3.8 The next steps in this process are as follows:

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- (a) *Report to Cabinet*
The results of the "pre-statutory" consultation now need to be considered and Cabinet needs to decide whether or not it wishes to take forward the proposal to close Northview Primary School and extend Westrop Primary School.
 - (b) *Statutory consultation*
If it is decided to take forward this proposal, the next stage involves the publication of Public Notices for a six-week period. This provides the opportunity for stakeholders to make written comments on and objections to the proposal.
 - (c) *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").
 - (d) *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.

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

Actual/Target Date	Event
21 October 2009	Further report to Cabinet with results of consultation and ongoing consultation with staff and Unions
October/November/December 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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- 3.10 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 reception primary places to start school in September 2010. 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.

Conclusions

- 4.1 Forecast pupil numbers are expected to continue to decline in Highworth over the coming years and action needs to be taken to address this. Northview Primary School currently is 68% empty and is forecast to be 85% empty by 2013. Council policy requires that schools with around 25% or more surplus places need to be scrutinised closely to identify any action that needs to be taken to address this.
- 4.2 In the consultation on the proposed closure of Northview Primary School and expansion of Westrop Primary School, the Northview parents, staff, Governors and local community were overwhelmingly against closure. There was more of a mixed picture at Westrop Primary School, with concerns raised but also support from the Governing Body, subject to there being sufficient funding available. A similar position is being taken by the Head Teachers in the Cluster (excluding Northview Primary School), with support expressed for the proposal. The community consultation highlighted a number of issues and concerns, particularly what would happen to the Northview Primary School site if the School were closed, and increased traffic around Westrop Primary School.
- 4.3 Taking account of all the above, officers consider that there still remains a strong case for this proposal, particularly in the light of forecast pupil numbers and the very large and increasing number of surplus places at Northview Primary School. It is recommended that the next stage of "statutory" consultation is undertaken, with the outcome reported to a Panel of Cabinet in late 2009 or early 2010. Current forecasts indicate less than 40 pupils would be at Northview Primary School in a few years' time, taking into account that it is designed for 210 pupils. Cabinet's attention is particularly drawn to **Appendix 9**, which sets out officers' responses to the key points raised during the consultation, and the suggestion of a possible interim split-site arrangement (see paragraph 3.7(e)).

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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 and these were reported to the May 2009 meeting of Cabinet. 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 2.8FE 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.

(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.

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(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 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 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 at least ½ FE, as required for the foreseeable future.
 - There are currently three Reception-aged pupils in Northview Primary School and 68 pupils overall in the School.
 - The level of surplus capacity in Northview Primary School is currently 68% and is currently forecast to increase to 85% 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 accommodate all the pupils on roll at Westrop and Northview Primary Schools in

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September 2010. Alternatively, the Northview Primary School site could operate as a split-site for a period of time.

- 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. However, those associated with Northview Primary School are strongly opposed.

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 elsewhere, the Decision Makers' Guidance from the DCSF has a presumption against the closure of rural schools, of which Northview Primary School would be one.

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. **Appendix 8** provides four financial options regarding the potential outcome of this consultation process. The financial information attached to these options is based on the current funding formula with assumptions around pupil numbers and future levels of spend.
- Option 1 provides an indicative budget position for Northview Primary School if it remains open. As mentioned earlier, this is based on a similar level of expenditure as at the 2009/10 budget but takes account of the expected fall in pupil numbers.

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

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The additional pressure on the overall school budget and, therefore, a direct impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) over a five-year period would be in the region of £762k. It is also shown that the average per pupil element almost doubles over the five years from £3,153 to £8,519. This would present significant difficulties, as the DSG is already under considerable pressure and does not have the capacity to deliver the same level of services as well as support a school in such financial difficulty.

- 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 eventually the flat rate of £58k. However, an element of this will be required to support Westrop Primary School initially.
- There are two options that could be considered regarding the expansion of Westrop Primary School. The first is to use the existing Northview Primary School and operate Westrop as a split-site school and the second is to close the Northview site and expand Westrop to accommodate the increase in pupils. **Appendix 8** provides details of the financial implications of each option. Both scenarios show an overall saving to the DSG over a five-year period. It must be noted that no security costs have been included in the proposals where the Northview Primary School site is formally closed; this could create a further cost to the DSG.
- 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 primary sector, only four schools receive this allocation, Northview being one, although they only receive a small amount. Due to the level of funding the LA receives from the Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF), it is important that the LA 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.

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- 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.
- Within the Council's Capital Programme, a major scheme has recently been completed 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, and funding has been made available in the Capital Programme should it be needed. 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. However, alternative options are being explored to reduce any cost implications. An alternative arrangement is the use of the Northview Primary School site as a split-site for Westrop Primary School for a period of time and this has also been assessed (see Appendix 8). In addition, were this proposal 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 around £95k. There may also be a requirement for a mini-roundabout at the junction of St Michaels Avenue and Newburgh Place, costing around £16k, and for a Traffic Regulation Order to manage the parking pressures outside Westrop Primary School, which could cost another £8k. 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 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. All of these costs have been assessed within Appendix 8.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Ian Bickerton, Director of Access & Provision, on 485724 or Email ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 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 tables 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	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	295.007	14.690

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Legal / Human Rights Implications

- 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.
- The Head Teacher and Assistant Head at Northview Primary School have currently been seconded from another Swindon school and the Authority, although Northview Primary School staff are potentially at risk of redundancy. However, the Authority would do everything possible to seek to redeploy other staff within other Highworth and 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.

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Equality Implications

Attached as Appendix 10 is an Interim Diversity Impact Assessment.

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.
- The "pre-statutory" consultation undertaken is set out in detail throughout this report.

Background Papers and Appendices

- Report to Cabinet 20 May 2009
- Appendix 1 – Actual and forecast pupil numbers
- Appendix 2 – Map
- Appendix 3 – Key Issues as reported to the May 2009 Meeting of Cabinet
- Appendix 4 – Consultation document
- Appendix 5 – Letter sent to local Highworth residents
- Appendix 6 – Summary of key issues and comments raised at consultation meetings and drop-in sessions and results of feedback forms
- Appendix 7 – Letters and document from Northview Action Group
- Appendix 8 – Financial & Value for Money Assessment
- Appendix 9 – Responses by officers to key points raised in consultation
- Appendix 10 – Interim Diversity Impact Assessment

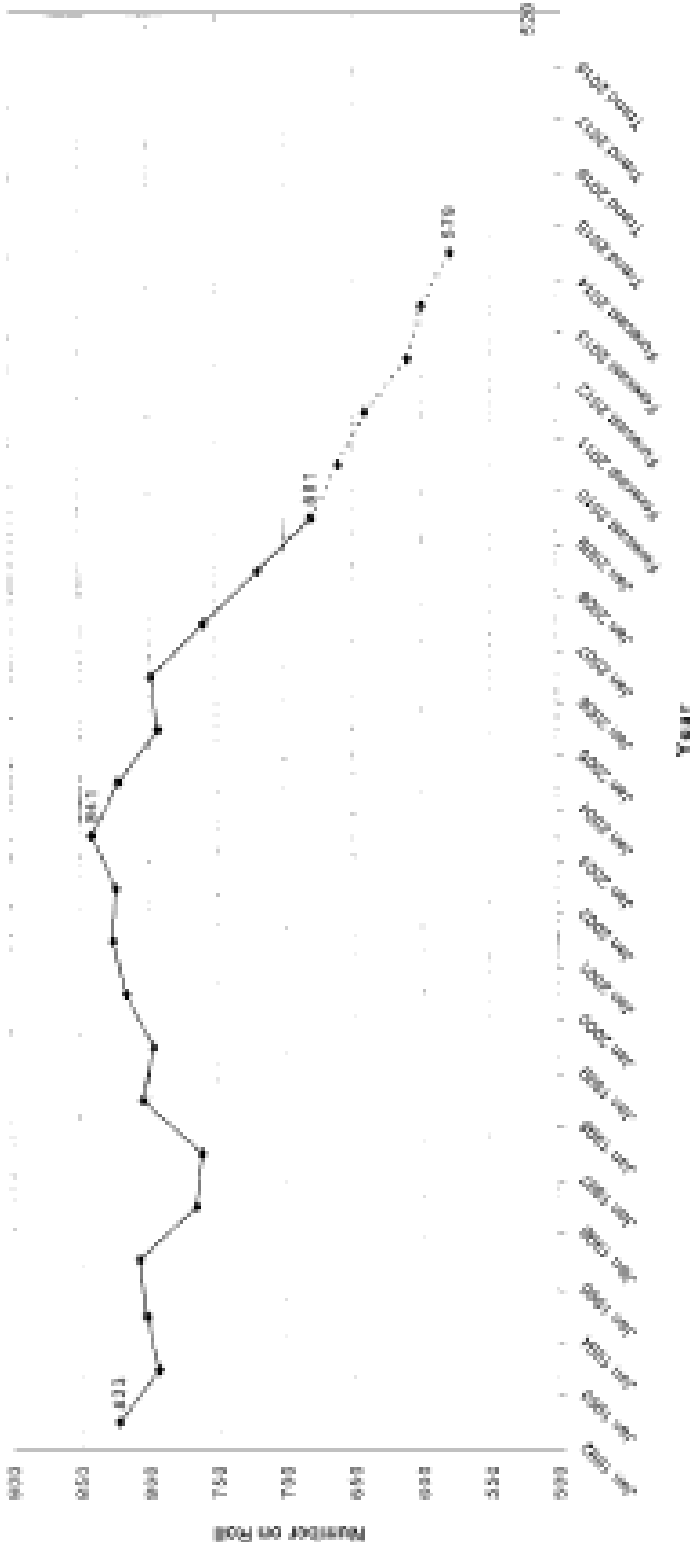
Key Decision / Decision in Forward Plan

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

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APPENDIX 1
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Highworth Area Number on Roll from January 1992 to January 2009
Forecast and Trends to January 2018



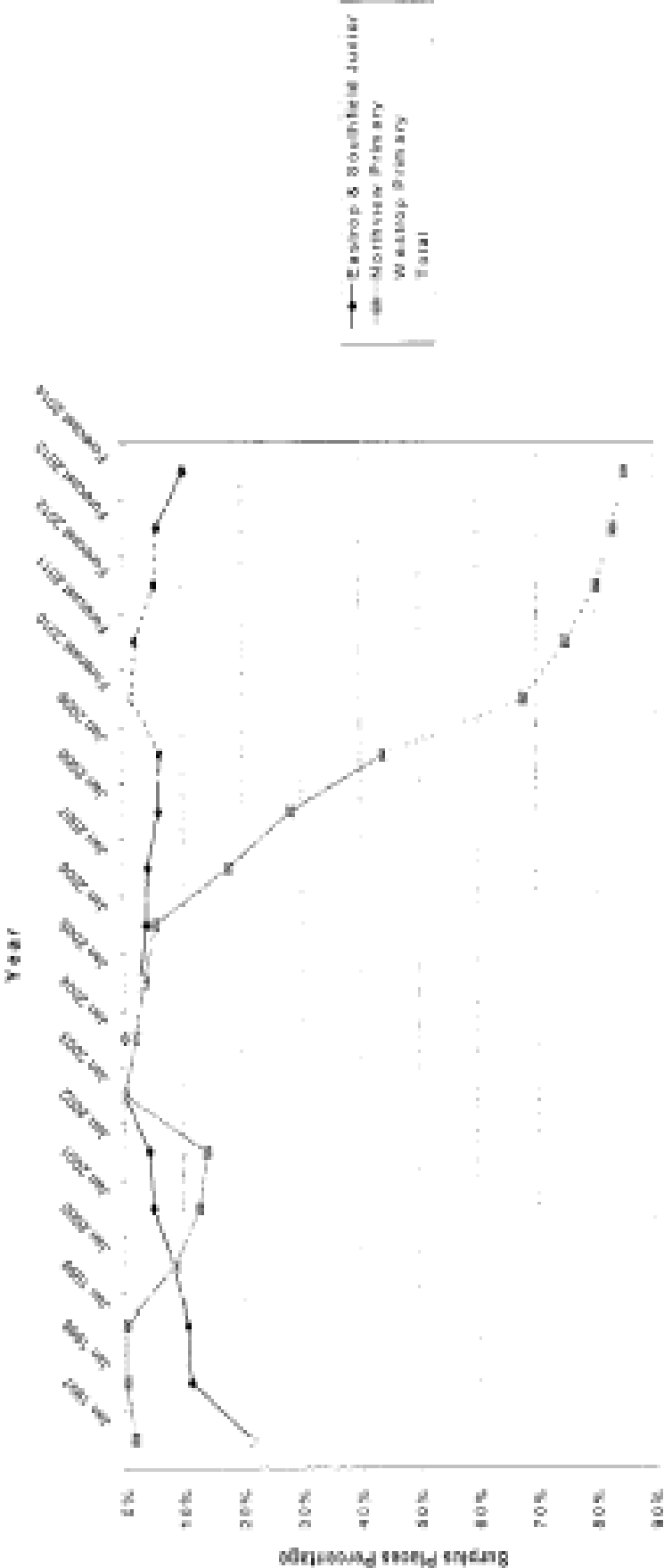
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Highworth Area Surplus Places Percentage from 1997 and Forecast to 2014



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Highworth Area - Projection based on September 09 NOR & preschool data for September 09

SCHOOL	NOR		Planned		NOR		Surplus		NOR		Surplus		Est. projected		Est. projected		Est. projected		Est. projected		Diff in	
	Jan	2007	Admission	2009/10	Jan	2008	Jan	09	Jan	2009	Jan	09	Jan	10	Jan	11	Jan	12	Jan	13	2013	2013
Highworth area																						
Eastop Infant	159	164	60	151	7.9%	153	6.7%	159	3.0%	166	0.0%	167	0.6%	166	0.0%	166	0.0%	166	0.0%	166	0.0%	-3
Northrow Primary	173	210	30	151	28.1%	118	43.6%	66	67.6%	53	74.6%	42	80.0%	36	82.9%	32	84.8%	215	10.4%	215	10.4%	-119
Southfield Junior	229	240	60	229	4.8%	226	5.8%	239	0.4%	230	4.2%	216	10.0%	215	10.4%	215	10.4%	215	10.4%	215	10.4%	-14
Westop Primary	199	198	30	189	4.5%	184	7.1%	185	1.6%	192	3.0%	185	6.6%	183	7.6%	184	7.1%	183	7.6%	184	7.1%	-5
Total	760	812		720	11.3%	681	16.1%	661	18.6%	641	21.1%	610	24.9%	600	26.1%	579	28.7%	600	26.1%	579	28.7%	-141

Forms of Entry 3.8 4 3.4 3.2 3.1 2.9 2.8
1 fill = 210 ie 30 per year group

Highworth Area exc St Andrews	Reception			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
PCT Data				
Preschool children in area	86	94	82	94
Forms of entry	2.9	3.1	2.7	3.1

Average
86
2.9

Highworth Area exc St Andrews	Reception			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
PCT Data Trend Forecast				
Preschool children in area	79	77	75	72
Forms of entry	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.4

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

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APPENDIX 3

Key Issues as reported to the May 2009 Meeting of Cabinet

School Places Strategy

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.

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.

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

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 1/3 form of entry (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.

Forecast pupil numbers shown in **Appendix 1** indicate that by September 2013 there will be a need for only 2.8 FE, compared to the 4FE currently available (excluding St Andrews Primary School).

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Rural Schools

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 & 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.

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."

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.

Statutory Processes

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.

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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.

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.

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".

Travel & Traffic Implications

Attached as Annex 1 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 the paragraph 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.

Annex 1 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.

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Westrop (2005 and updated 2008), Southfield (2008) 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	Carshare	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 (57.9%)		3 (2.8%)	29 (27.4%)		2 (1.9%)			106
Northview	2008	78 (51.7%)		43 (28.5%)	30 (19.9%)					151
	2009	65 (50.5%)			63 (48.6%)				1 (0.8%)	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	166 (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 Shrivensham 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.

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

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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 (A381) 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 29.38mph (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.

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.

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CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and Governors of Northview and Westrop
Primary Schools**

This consultation document sets out a proposal to address an increasing number of surplus places in primary schools in the Highworth area. We are very keen to hear your views, and those of the local community, on the proposal and these will be reported back to Swindon's Cabinet who will make the final decision.

Please note that end of the consultation period and the last day therefore for you to send your comments, is **30th September 2009**.

What is proposed?

The proposal on which the Local Authority (LA) wishes to hear your views is the option to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group which is the equivalent to ½ form of entry). If the proposal is agreed, then Northview Primary School would close on 31st August 2010 and all children who are attending at that time would automatically transfer to Westrop Primary School for 1st September 2010.

We fully appreciate that this is a difficult and uncertain time for parents, staff, pupils and everyone associated with the Highworth Primary schools. If you have concerns, questions or views about what is being proposed, then the LA is arranging a consultation meeting for you to attend (see details on page 2). We are keen that you complete and return the response form at the back of this document. You can also contact Gareth Cheal on telephone 01793 465802 (email gcheal@swindon.gov.uk) or Chris Williams on telephone 01793 465771 (email cwilliams@swindon.gov.uk).

Consultation meetings with school community

A special Cabinet meeting was held on 20th May 2009 that considered options for consultation to address the increasing number of surplus places in the Highworth area. Further detail can be found in the report and it is available at www.swindon.gov.uk/yourcouncil or by contacting the telephone numbers above.

In addition to the LA written information and response form provided in this document, the LA has also arranged meetings at Northview and Westrop Primary Schools to allow you to ask questions you might have and put forward any comments.

The dates and times of the Council's consultation meetings are set out below.

Additional consultation meetings may be arranged during the consultation period, as required.

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

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Please note that parents and carers have a choice of two meetings to attend at the school their child is on roll:

Westrop Primary School - 6 th July 2009	
Parents/Carers	3.30pm
Staff	5.00pm
Governors	6.15pm
Parents/Carers	7.30pm

Northview Primary School - 9 th July, 2009	
Parents/Carers	3.30pm
Staff	5.00pm
Governors	6.15pm
Parents/Carers	7.30pm

A crèche facility will be available at each school for the 3.30 p.m. parents' meeting, with a limited number of places available. If you would like to book a place for your child, please contact Tricia Devaney on 01793 465748 or speak to Gareth Cheal or Chris Williams on the telephone numbers referred to earlier.

Background to Pupil Numbers in Highworth

Pupil numbers have been and are forecast to significantly decline in the Highworth area over the coming years. There are currently 4 schools in Highworth offering primary education from ages 4 to 11. They are:

- Eastrop Infant School 4 to 7
- Southfield Junior School 7 to 11
- Northview Primary School 4 to 11
- Westrop Primary School 4 to 11

Overall, these schools have the capacity to offer 812 primary school places. However, the demand for these places is currently expected to decrease to 560 by September 2012 leaving 252 places unoccupied. The situation is set out in the graph on page 3.

The forecast pupil numbers use the actual class sizes rolled forward and also the live births and pre school children information from the Primary Care Trust that the LA receives annually in the Autumn. The latest information will be reported to Cabinet when received. A nationally recognised method of forecasting is used and the trend forecasts for 2014 onwards are calculated using a linear trend to estimate birth figures, which have been based on actual birth data for the last 10 years.

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

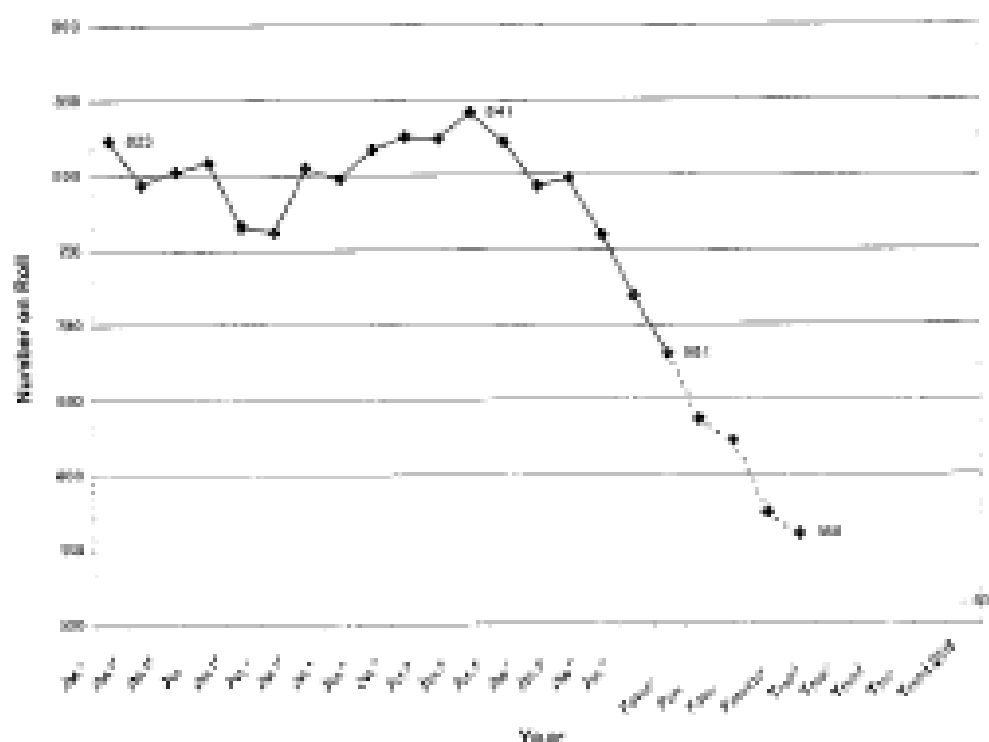
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Highworth Area Number on Roll from January 1992 to January 2014
Forecast and Trends to January 2018



The above graph therefore shows the actual and forecast numbers of primary pupil numbers in Highworth, together with trends from 2014 onwards.

Local Authorities are required to address the position for those schools with significant and increasing levels of surplus capacity. The LA has a Surplus School Places Strategy, as set out in the School Organisation Plan, which requires "excessive" surplus places to be addressed. The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that:

- Schools do not have "excessive" levels of surplus capacity, which can create problems with school organisation and financial viability. In the longer run this can have an adverse effect on the quality of education provided.

The Audit Commission (an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services) recommends a Local Authority's overall surplus places to be in the region of 6% to 8% in order to allow some flexibility. At an individual school level, the benchmark for considering action to remove surplus places is 25%.

The graph on page 4 shows the overall actual, forecast and trend primary pupil numbers across Highworth affecting individual schools, including the particularly high level of surplus places at Northview Primary School.

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

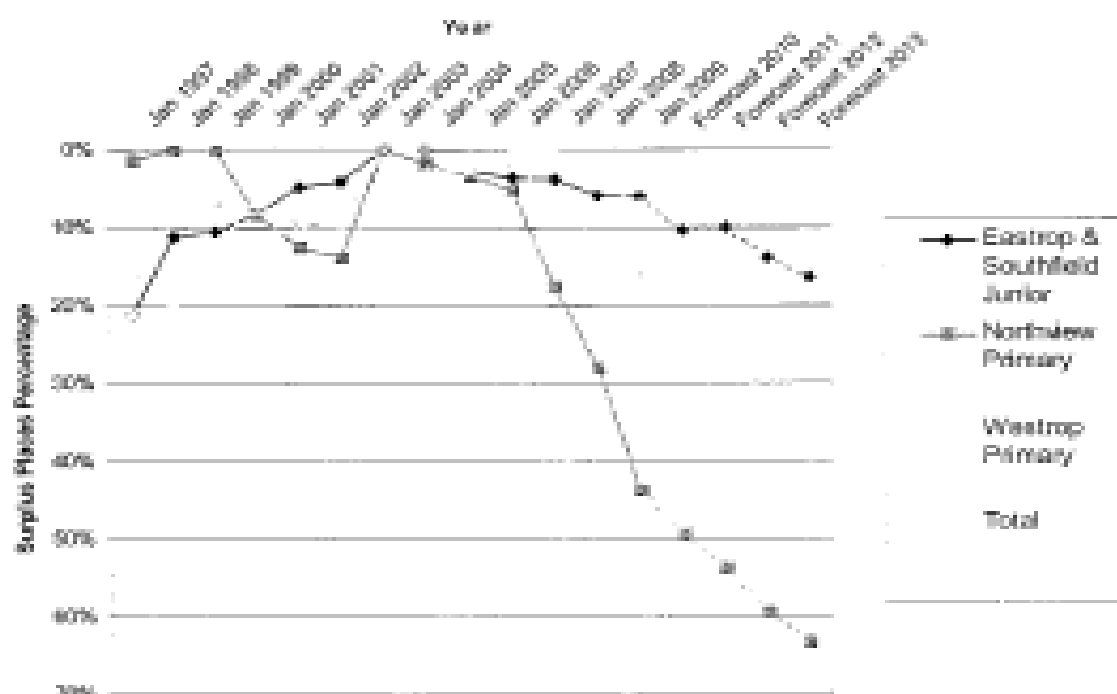
Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

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Highworth Area Surplus Places Percentage from 1997 and Forecast to 2013



Objectives of the proposal

The LA wishes to consult the parents, staff and Governors of Northview and Westrop Primary Schools about the proposal to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places. This would therefore have the effect of reducing the overall number of places available in Highworth by 1/3 from entry, the minimum considered necessary to address falling pupil numbers in the area. A single or one form entry school has an admission number of 30 in Reception and has a total of 210 places available across all year groups in the school.

We would also wish to hear the views of others within the local community about this proposal.

The proposal for the two schools would mean, if this went ahead that:

- Northview Primary School would 'close' on 31st August 2010 and Westrop Primary School would be expanded by 105 places (1/2 form of entry) from 1st September 2010
- All children on roll at Northview Primary School at the time of the closure would automatically transfer to the roll of Westrop Primary School
- The LA believes that generally there are strong arguments in favour of the proposal.
- At meetings and discussions held to-date, Head Teachers and Governors of other Highworth schools have indicated their support for this proposal. On the other hand, parents and others from Northview Primary School have so far made clear that they do not support what is being proposed.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Ian Bickerton, Director of Access & Provision, on 485724 or Email ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk.

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Surplus Places at Northview and Westrop Primary Schools

The proposal is therefore primarily to resolve an issue about surplus school places due to the changing age profile in Highworth.

Both Northview and Westrop Primary Schools are currently 1 form of entry (i.e. an admission number of 30). The surplus capacity as at November 2008 in Northview Primary School was 43% and at Westrop Primary School 7%. However, it is currently predicted that the surplus capacities for the two schools will increase to 63% and 26% respectively by 2012. The most recent figures available for Northview Primary School (at June 2009) indicate that there will only be a very small number of pupils entering Reception in September 2009, with relatively few pupils in all age groups.

Teaching and Standards

The standards of pupil achievement are in line with expectations at both schools. However, we are concerned that Northview Primary School may be unable to maintain these standards in the longer-term, with the declining numbers of pupils on roll. Whilst a lower number of pupils on roll does not mean lower standards, it may be more difficult to attract staff, with the range of expertise needed for a small school, and this could have a negative impact on pupil achievement. We consider that this proposal would further strengthen the capacity of Highworth schools to sustain improvement. As part of each school's strategic planning, the LA expects every school to develop clear actions to raise standards, or if they are already high, to maintain that level of performance.

As mentioned above larger primary schools offer more opportunities for flexible teaching arrangements, for example, for intervention groups through more efficient use of money and staff and opportunities for teachers to extend their expertise. An expanded primary school can provide a broader range of learning experiences including extended schools opportunities and it can also make targeted or specialised appointments taking account of the current skills base.

Our belief is that this proposal will have the most positive impact on improving standards and achievement in the longer term.

Other Key Issues

We also want to hear your views on other aspects of this proposal, including:

- **"Rural" Schools**
All Highworth schools are designated as "rural" schools by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. When considering the proposed closure of a "rural" school, the LA must consider:
 - likely effect on the local community;
 - transport costs;
 - effect on traffic;
 - alternatives to closure (alternative options were considered at the special Cabinet meeting on 20th May 2009).

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

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All of these factors must be considered by Cabinet and you may have views on these that you would want to express at the consultation meetings.

- **Travel and Traffic**

If Northview Primary School were closed, then this would mean some families would have to travel further to a Highworth school. This could increase traffic and would mean, in some cases, that the A361 would need to be crossed. Some parents have expressed strong concerns about this. However, the LA and School could take measures to mitigate these effects, such as improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, "walking buses" etc.

- **Links with Local Community**

The possible closure of Northview Primary School would have an effect on the local community and we would particularly like to hear your views on this, so they can be reported to Cabinet.

However, were Westrop Primary School to be expanded, it would provide an opportunity to develop links with a wider community, with a broader range of extended school opportunities. This is already underway at Westrop Primary School through the provision of a Children's Centre. The facility will be run by the School and will offer the following services:

- o Jobs and Benefits advice and childminding training
- o Family and parenting support
- o Child and family health services
- o Early Years education provided by the voluntary sector in partnership with the School

- **Staffing**

Separate consultation meetings will be held with the teaching and support staff of both Schools and Trade Unions will be fully involved in those discussions. This is a very uncertain time for staff, especially of Northview Primary School, and as a member of staff, you may wish to contact Anne English in HR (Tel: 01793 464884, email: aenglish@swindon.gov.uk).

- **Value for money**

As mentioned earlier, excessive levels of surplus places do not represent good value for money. In particular, high and increasing levels of surplus places in schools:

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

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- ➔ make it more difficult for Head Teachers and Governing Bodies to manage their budgets efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis as 80% of a schools budget is generated by the number of pupils they have in the school. It is estimated that schools with between 80-100 pupils cost 16% more per pupil to run.
(<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/telling-school-rolls/context/small-schools>)
- ➔ create uncertainty, making future budget planning more difficult and may mean that schools need to consider redundancies;
- ➔ draw more money out of the finite pot of Government finance (the "Dedicated Schools Grant", (DSG) which is allocated on a per pupil basis) available for all schools in Swindon, particularly bearing in mind that the Borough is the 17th worst funded in the country. It is therefore important that the LA pro-actively keeps the number of surplus places to the minimum necessary.

This is the reason why the LA has a policy of considering school reorganisations when there is 25% surplus capacity in a school, particularly where that figure is forecast to increase over the coming years.

In the case of Northview Primary School, it is currently forecast that there will be over 60% surplus places by 2012. This means, for example, that the School will receive an increasing level of "small schools' protection", up to a maximum of £63k. This additional allocation has to be found from within the existing DSG budget from which schools are funded. The LA will not receive any further funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families as pupil numbers have not increased. As a result, this puts additional pressure on the DSG.

Although a decision to close a school should not be based on financial grounds alone, Children Services will, in consultation with related stakeholders, produce a high level financial business case to be presented to Cabinet to assist in the final decision.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will there be a place for my child in Highworth if Northview Primary School closes?
--

Yes. There will be places made available for all pupils in Highworth from September 2010, based on current pupil forecasts.

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

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Will there be transport available for my child to attend Westrop Primary School?

No. Although the distance for most parents to travel to school will increase, the School and College Transport Policy will only offer transport to pupils who live over two miles from their catchment school. The current Northview Primary School catchment area is within two miles of Westrop Primary School.

Will parents/carers of children at Northview Primary School need to apply for a place at Westrop Primary School if the proposal goes ahead?

No. All the children on roll at Northview Primary School at the time of the closure will automatically be transferred on to the roll of the expanded Westrop Primary School. However, parents are entitled to express a preference for any school and, if there is a place available, the Admission Authority has a duty to agree to this. It is expected that an additional mobile classroom will be made available at Westrop Primary School to ensure there is sufficient space initially.

What would be the impact on childminding/childcare arrangements if this proposal went ahead?

There are 15 childminders in Highworth of whom 8 offer to pick up children from Northview Primary School. Three of these also collect from other schools. Westrop Primary School has both a breakfast club and an after school club. In addition 5 childminders offer a pick up service from Westrop Primary School. This provides good childcare capacity. As mentioned earlier, the new Children's Centre at Westrop will provide a range of services and opportunities for the Highworth Community, including family and parenting support and childminding training.

Will children be taught in mixed age classes?

If Westrop Primary School is expanded it is expected that there may be a need to mix classes by age in the short term. This is something that the LA, Head Teacher and Governing Body would consider carefully and we would want to hear the views of parents on this.

How would Westrop Primary School infrastructure cope with the influx of an additional 105 pupils?

Westrop Primary School site has been assessed using the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance and is able to accommodate the additional ½ form of entry utilising the existing school infrastructure. In the short term a temporary classroom is expected to be installed on the school site if the proposal went ahead.

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth****APPENDIX 4****CABINET****Date: 21 October 2009****Who decides if this proposal goes ahead?**

The LA is able to decide the closure of Northview Primary School and the expansion of Westrop Primary School locally. The target timeline below sets out the various stages of the decision making process. The views expressed by parents/carers, staff, Governors and others will be fully reported to Cabinet, expected to be October 2009. The meeting is open to members of the public.

Has Northview Primary School received the support it has needed?

Every school in Swindon is supported by a School Improvement Partner who visits the school a minimum of 3 times a year and advises the governing body of the Head Teacher's performance management.

Northview Primary has received the following additional support from the LA:

- 2004-05 16 days – advice on the curriculum, leadership and assessment.
- 2005-06 66.5 days – intensive support to leadership, governance, curriculum and assessment.
- 2006-07 34 days – advice on the curriculum, leadership and assessment.
- 2007-08 17.5 days - advice and training on making teaching and learning outstanding and support to the school's self evaluation.
- 2008-09 extensive support whilst the Head Teacher is absent due to ill-health, provided by Grange Infant School and arranged by the LA. Advice and training in governance, personnel, finance, numeracy, writing and support to pupils with English as an additional language.

What happens to a parent's choice of school if Northview Primary School closes?

Every parent is entitled to express a preference for the school of their choice. The LA has a duty to comply with the preference if there is a place available at the preferred school. If Northview Primary School does close then this entitlement will not be affected, although the options available to parents will reduce.

What will happen to the staff at Northview Primary School if the proposal goes ahead?

If the proposal goes ahead, the LA would undertake a full consultation with staff and Unions to go through the implications to individuals. We have a clear process in place to follow in such circumstances.

What will happen to the land and buildings of Northview Primary School?

There is no decision yet about the long-term use of the land and buildings. Any proposed use would be subject to consultation with local residents. The land has not been reserved for housing.

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth****APPENDIX 4****CABINET****Date: 21 October 2009****Timetable – Target Dates**

Target dates in the decision making process are as follows:

Date	Stage
3 rd July 2009	'Pre-Statutory' Consultation begins
6 th July 2009 (Westrop Primary School) 9 th July 2009 (Northview Primary School)	Consultation meetings take place at Westrop Primary School and Northview Primary School
30 th September 2009	'Pre-Statutory' Consultation ends
21 st October 2009	Outcome of 'Pre-Statutory' Consultation reported to Cabinet Meeting
October/November 2009	If agreed, the statutory consultation commences
December 2009/January 2010	Decision by Cabinet Panel
September 2010	If agreed, proposed implementation

Thank you for reading this document.

It is not possible to cover all aspects of this proposal in detail in this brochure and it is suggested that you come along to one of the consultation meetings. You may or may not take a different view to us about this proposal, and the consultation meetings and the response form attached are your opportunities to put your views and opinions for Cabinet to consider.

If you have any specific queries or concerns, please do contact:

Gareth Cheal Tel: 01793 465802 Email: gcheal@swindon.gov.uk
Chris Williams Tel: 01793 465771 Email: cpwilliams@swindon.gov.uk

You may wish to complete and return the attached response form by
30th September 2009 at the latest.

Thank you

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
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CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Response Form

Pre-statutory consultation

Proposed closure of Northview Primary School and the expansion of Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group) from September 2010

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Please tick:

Which school are you representing?

Northview

☐

Westrop

☐

Which of the following category do you belong to?

Parent

☐

Governor

☐

Staff

☐

Other (please specify
below i.e.
Community/Resident)

☐

Do you support the linked proposals to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group)?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Comments: (You may wish to attach additional sheets)

Signature: _____

Responses must be received by 30th September 2009 at the latest

Please return response forms to either school office or by post to:

Tricia Denney
Children's Services, Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon Borough Council SN1 1QH
01793 465748
email: tdenney@swindon.gov.uk



The information you provide will be used for the analysis of responses received as part of the Pre-Statutory consultation on the proposal to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School for the purposes of compiling recommendations for Cabinet. Personal Information will not be shared with any other sections of the Council.

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
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APPENDIX 5

**LETTER SENT TO LOCAL HIGHWORTH RESIDENTS
PROPOSED REORGANISATION OF NORTHVIEW AND WESTROP PRIMARY
SCHOOLS – HIGHWORTH COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
DROP IN SESSIONS**

You will have received a letter in May 2009 or you may have heard that Swindon Borough Council is undertaking consultation in the Highworth area about a proposal to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School from September 2010. The key aim of the proposal is to reduce the number of empty primary school places in the town.

Overall the schools in Highworth offering primary education (4-11 years) have the capacity to offer around 800 school places. The forecasted numbers for the area indicate that the future demand will decrease. This indicates that in the future there will be a need for only 3 schools in Highworth offering primary education (4-11 years).

On the 20th May 2009 Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet made a recommendation to consult with the school communities of Northview and Westrop Primary Schools on the proposal. However, we fully understand that the proposal could impact communities in Highworth outside the schools directly involved and we are keen to provide more information and to hear your views.

We will therefore be holding 'drop in sessions' for the wider Highworth community where there will be detailed information on display and Officers from Swindon Borough Council present to discuss the key issues and answer any questions, including:

- How many empty school places will there be in Highworth?
- What will happen to the Northview site if the proposal goes ahead?
- What will be the effect on Teaching and Standards in Highworth?
- What will be the impact on travel, traffic and parking?
- Will there be transport available?
- What will the impact on the wider community?
- Will children be taught in mixed age classes?
- How will this proposal affect parental choice?
- When would a final decision be made?
- Any other issue that you wish to express as part of the proposal.

You are very welcome to attend one of the following 'drop in' sessions to find out more:

8th September 2009

Any time between 3.30pm – 6.30pm at Westrop Primary School

10th September 2009

Any time between 3.30pm – 6.30pm at Northview Primary School

We are very keen to discuss the proposal with you. In addition you can also find out more on the Council's website

www.swindon.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schoolsconsultation or you can contact

Chris Williams on telephone 01793 465771 (cwilliams@swindon.gov.uk)

Gareth Cheal on telephone 01793 465802 (gcheal@swindon.gov.uk)

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
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APPENDIX 6

**SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES & COMMENTS RAISED AT
CONSULTATION MEETINGS AND DROP-IN SESSIONS
and RESULTS OF FEEDBACK FORMS**

Key Issues from Consultation Meetings at Westrop Primary School – 06.07.09

Parents (32 attendees)

- Size of School in relation to funding formula and amount of funding
- Absorbing pupils from Northview Primary School
- Site and size of temporary accommodation and length of time it will be there
- Flexibility of accommodation
- Will this reorganisation result in mixed-aged classes and, if so, this would be a strong concern
- Concerns raised about whether there would be large classes at Key Stage 2, including staff/pupil ratio
- What will happen to Northview site if School closed
- Were other options considered
- No benefit to Westrop in taking on the problem
- Lack of infrastructure at Westrop a problem
- What resources will be provided to Westrop if the expansion takes place
- Traffic, zebra crossing and parking raised as concerns
- Blunsdon school not included in figures – why is this
- Retain Northview for current Key Stage 2 pupils to avoid double move for pupils
- Use Northview as 6th Form college
- Decision already made to proceed with proposal

Staff (9 attendees) – no issues raised

Governors (5 attendees)

- Demands of curriculum planning for split classes and LA support but this not seen as a problem
- Clear as to implications of proposal and benefit to pupils
- Is finance based on pupil numbers or is there an allowance for adjustments
- Unable to manage without trigger funding until 2011 with extra staff costs
- Will fight to get resources
- What will happen to Northview's budget and resources, eg. computers, books
- Temporary mobile – facilities and length of time it will be there
- Community resentment towards Westrop

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**Key Issues from Consultation Meetings at Northview Primary School –
09.07.09**

Parents (42 attendees)

- Will there be extra funding at Westrop for more teachers and facilities
- Safety of children walking to Westrop and funding for crossing, etc
- Would make traffic flow situation worse, including parking
- Future use of the Northview site has not been stated
- Lack of strong leadership in the past has caused decline – could be reversed. Rumours about School closure have not helped.
- What is the availability of school places other than at Westrop
- "Them and us" atmosphere between Northview and Westrop
- Disadvantages of a bigger school
- How will the classes at Westrop be organised and who takes that decision
- Children may not receive appropriate support in mixed-age classes and larger classes
- Are the pupil number forecasts correct, what is the basis of forecast pupil numbers and how do you know the reduction in numbers will continue
- There needs to be more research into other options reported to Cabinet and consultation about these.
- What are the alternatives if this proposal is not accepted
- Lack of financial information and costings, including value for money
- Northview has better results than Westrop
- Decision to close Northview has already been made
- Ensure drop-in consultation sessions are widely publicised

Staff (10 attendees)

- Perceived implications in consultation document as to standards at Northview
- Perceived skewed information in consultation document about LA support received by Northview and Westrop
- Advantages and disadvantages of big and small schools
- Future class sizes at Westrop and whether Westrop site is adequate size
- LA bias against Northview and hidden agenda
- Lack of available costings
- LA delay in addressing declining pupil numbers
- What the processes are about staff redundancy and redeployment
- Pedestrian crossing is needed to ensure safety on the A361

Governors (9 attendees)

- Falling numbers are due to management problems
- Traffic and road safety are key issues
- Proposal not covering all issues – unable to make informed choice
- Standards at Northview are good
- Adequacy of Westrop site and mobile in relation to class sizes

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

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- Keep Northview open until current Years 3 and 4 go to Wameford to avoid pupils having to move twice

Key Issues from Community Drop-in Consultation Meetings

Westrop (16 attendees)

- Decisions should not be made on finance and sufficient funding being made available to Westrop School
- Parking/Traffic issues outside Westrop cause concern and this becoming worse were Westrop to expand
- Concern over class sizes at Westrop and concern over mixed classes (especially Reception)
- Forecasts cannot be relied upon
- Northview should be given a chance and a timescale should be set for the turnaround
- How do I make a choice of school for September
- What will happen with the Northview site
- Need to communicate that the school size for Westrop will increase to 9 classes from 7
- Noise levels will increase with more pupils, as housing backs onto the school field

Northview (30 attendees)

- What will happen to the site if Northview School is closed
- Concerns about road safety and travel, in particular, the need to cross the A361 - it would be essential for additional road safety measures to be put in place were Northview School to be closed
- The possibility of the Northview site being used as a split-site for maybe a couple of years was discussed, to enable the older children to remain there until they move to Secondary school - advantages and disadvantages were raised
- A proposal that a trial federation for maybe a couple of years would be a better way forward, involving Northview School being linked to another Primary or Infant/Junior school in Highworth
- Questions as to whether the pupil number forecasting may be incorrect in the light of the recession and other factors - it would, therefore, be premature to close the School until there is more clarity about future pupil numbers

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
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RESULTS OF FEEDBACK FORMS

<u>Northview</u>	Numbers Responded
Parents	33
Resident/Other	326
Staff	7
Governors	4
Support	0
Oppose	370

<u>Westrop</u>	Numbers Responded
Parents	13
Resident/Other	13
Staff	0
Governors	2
Support	5
Oppose	23

66% of Northview Primary School parents have responded to the consultation and 6% of Westrop Primary School parents.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Ian Bickerton, Director of Access & Provision, on 455724 or Email ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk.

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APPENDIX 7

**LETTERS RECEIVED
& DOCUMENT FROM NORTHVIEW ACTION GROUP**

Ian Bickerton, Director of Access and Provision
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
SWINDON
SN1 1QH

8.09.09

Dear Ian

During this period of consultation, regarding the proposed closure of Northview Primary School, the Highworth and Blunsdon Cluster Head Teachers would like to re-iterate that we continue to believe that this option is in the best interests of all the pupils of Highworth.

The issue of the falling pupil roll in Highworth remains unchanged, as do our reasons for opposing an amalgamation of Eastrop Infant School and Southfield Junior School, or a reduction from two form entry to one and a half form entry at those schools. Both schools offer a high standard of education and have excellent facilities.

However, we would like to make it very clear that in the event of the closure of Northview and the transfer of pupils to Westrop, the appropriate amount of funding must accompany the Northview pupils in order to support their continuing education, as well as to ensure that resources are not compromised for the current Westrop pupils.

The cluster head teachers (except Northview) have agreed that it would be unacceptable to expect Westrop to fund the additional teachers, which would be required, to teach the transferring pupils and we would expect that funding to made available at the time of transfer.

We accept that this view is not supported by the governing body and staff at Northview,

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Jane Whentley
For, and on behalf of, Sue Marshall, John Saunders, Janet Urban, Paul White.

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

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Date: 21 October 2009

Cc Paddy Bradley, Director of Schools and Learning



SWINDON BRANCH

UNISON Office
Civic Offices
Euclid Street
Swindon SN1 2JH

Tel : 01793 463729
Email : unionswindon@swindon.gov.uk

18th September 2009

To: Cabinet Members
Swindon Borough Council

Dear Councillor

Proposal to close Northview School, Highworth - UNISON Response

UNISON is the biggest trade union for school support staff in Swindon. We represent six members at Northview School. Following consultation with our members on the proposal to close the school, I would make the following response.

UNISON does not support the closure of the school, believing this would have a considerable adverse effect on both our members at the school and in general on education and children in Highworth.

Effect on School Support Staff

Most support staff at Northview have a long-standing association with the school, as parents, as well as employees. They either currently have children at the school, or their children previously attended here. Most of the support staff have only worked at Northview School.

Most support staff at the school live in Highworth, and have children attending Highworth schools. This responsibility for their children, coupled with the fact that not all support staff have private transport, would prevent any redeployment outside of Highworth for a number of members.

Whilst if closure goes ahead, redeployment to Westrop School would appear to be the first option, there is concern that this may not offer security for staff over the medium or long term. This is because this proposal is only seen as a stopgap, and Westrop itself may face closure in the future.

There is currently a very good team spirit amongst staff at Northview School, which not only is of obvious benefit to the pupils, but engenders positive and supportive working amongst employees. Closing the school would destroy this.

Effect on Education and Children

Apart from one difficult year, where particular adverse circumstances applied, Northview has achieved consistently good SATs results – and in general provides a good all-round education. The school has the advantage of being on an attractive site, which provides excellent opportunities for educational enrichment with regards to science and to personal/social/health development.

Northview is the only primary school in Highworth with a kitchen that provides hot meals. This service is enjoyed by a significant number of pupils at the school.

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UNISON is concerned that the closure of Northview would have a particularly detrimental effect on vulnerable pupils, including two in care and a number with special needs. The close support for these pupils by Teaching Assistants ensures that their attendance at Northview provides stability for both the pupils and their parents.

UNISON shares the concern of many others associated with the school, about the transport issues that would arise if Northview closed. The A361 main road bisects the town, and Westrop and Northview are on opposite sides of this, which presents a major obstacle to children walking to school, if they are transferred to Westrop. Inevitably, more parents would drive their children to school, in addition to those that already drop them off by car on their way to work. Parking/dropping off areas are insufficient at Westrop. The existing area already has to cater for a doctor's surgery, a police station, a new children's centre, local shops and local residents, as well as Westrop School. Addressing these transport issues to ensure safety and to overcome congestion will incur considerable additional costs for the Council.

Northview is a newer school than Westrop, and as such is likely to have lower maintenance costs. Despite the small pupil numbers that Northview has, the school does not run at a financial deficit. Can it be confirmed that other Highworth schools are in this situation?

Westrop does not currently have the capacity to accommodate Northview pupils, and therefore mobile classrooms will almost certainly be required. This would go directly against the Council's 'Promise 17' : 'Pupils need a high quality environment to learn. All existing unsuitable temporary building in our schools will be replaced'. There would also be problems over holding whole school assemblies etc.

Rumours of closure have already discouraged parents from applying to send their children to Northview. The proposal to close has already led to existing pupils being removed by their parents to other schools. This has obviously increased pressure on Northview with regard to the closure option. If this option is removed and the school's future confirmed, there is confidence that the school's good record will attract pupils again.

I would ask that Cabinet Members fully consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Bob Cretchley
Branch Secretary

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

The Board of Governors
Westrop Primary School
Rivers Way
Highworth
SN6 7DN

Ian Bickerton, Director of Access and Provision
Swindon Borough Council
Swinford House
Swindon
SN1 1QH

16th September 09

Dear Sir

In our recent Board meeting we discussed our response to the Swindon Borough Council Proposal document and this is our response as a governing body.

We are in agreement with the proposal to close Northmore Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by half a form of entry from September 2010. However it is essential that appropriate levels of funding and accommodation be in place. The Governors therefore would like to reiterate their commitment to these issues.

- The new classrooms recently completed on site are replacements for what lost and should remain as group teaching spaces, which enable a broad and balanced curriculum to be an entitlement for all children through a range of creative activities.
- Appropriate classroom accommodation is provided for the additional classes in accordance with the number of places required.
- So that all the children attending Westrop Primary School do not find their standard of education compromised appropriate funding for setting up and running these new classes is available when the pupils transfer.
- In order to keep costs to a minimum that Westrop Primary School may have access to furniture and equipment no longer required at Northmore Primary School so that these resources continue to benefit the children of the local community.

It is our hope that a decision, which is in the best interests of the local community and especially the children, whose education is our first priority, can be reached swiftly.

Looking forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Webb
Chairperson, Westrop Board of Governors

Cc: to Swindon Borough Council Cabinet
Cc: John Gilbert (Director of Education)

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Keep Northview School Open

Swindon Borough Council is proposing to close Northview School and expand Westrop School to take an extra 105 children. They published a consultation paper in July (available from the schools or on the Swindon Council website at <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/education/consultations/consultations.htm>) and held a series of consultation meetings before the summer holidays. At those meetings, many residents and parents expressed concern about the proposals, but the Council appear to have taken no notice and have not responded to the views raised. The last opportunity for Highworth residents to make their views heard is to complete the consultation response form and send it in before 30 September so that Councillors have to recognise the strength of local feeling.

What the proposal means for Road Safety

Closing Northview School would mean that all children from Severfields, The Donkeys and surrounding roads will have to travel further to get to school. The Council are saying that children should cross the A361, walk along Crane Furong, Henley Drive and up Brookfield to Westrop School. The Council are considering putting a zebra crossing on Lechlade Road next to the bus stops. This would be on the steep part of the hill, in the 40 mph speed limit. Northview parents believe this is completely inadequate and will put children in danger every school day.

Traffic coming from the Lechlade direction is going to be particularly affected by this extra crossing. To avoid having to stop on the hill, many drivers will soon find out that the crossing can be avoided by coming up Roundells Mead and along Brewery Street. The extra traffic returning around the town will make the roads to Eastrop, Southfield and Wansford Schools more dangerous, affecting almost every child in Highworth.

What the proposal means for Parents

If the Council's plan is approved, then Westrop School will have to take an extra 105 children. The school has said this will mean mixing age groups in the same classes, but have not explained how this will be done. Parents who had children at Westrop School last time this was tried say that it did not work well. Without open places, the quality of education given by the school could be affected. Parents deserve to be told how the school will educate their children.

The Council are planning to put two temporary classrooms in the Westrop School site. These will only hold another 60 children leaving up to 45 to be squeezed into the existing buildings in more cramped classes. Parents deserve to be told how the school will find space for their children.

Swindon Borough Council

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

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Keep Northview School Open

What the proposal means for Residents

The extra children that would go to Westrop School will come from further away than the current catchment area, so traffic around the school is going to get worse during the school run. Parking for the Corners, Gurney and Tesco will be even more congested. The traffic wardens have been outside Westrop School already since the start of term. Will they be a regular feature?

The extra traffic around Westrop School will also increase the parking jams that frequently occur in St Michael's Avenue. Regular users already know how much easier it is to turn at the Church during school holidays, than when the schools are open. More parents driving to and from Westrop every day will make this even worse.

The Council still haven't said what they plan to do with the Northview site. If the plan is approved, for local residents this could mean an empty building attracting anti-social behaviour for years before a decision is made. For Council Tax payers this would mean having to pay for security and maintenance of an empty building.

House prices in the area around both schools could be affected if the plan goes ahead. Estate Agents always say that families are attracted to buy houses with good access to nearby schools. If the council's proposal goes ahead, children who would have gone to Northview will be expected to travel to Westrop School instead, including having to cross the busy A361, twice a day. Without a convenient local school, houses in the area around the Northview site (eg The Corners, Sevenfields, Knowlands, Wesssex Vale etc) could be harder to sell in an already difficult market. House prices around Westrop School will inevitably be affected by the increased traffic problems.

What you can do NOW

The Northview Action Group is asking every resident of Highworth to voice his/her views on the proposal and to make their feelings known to the Council by sending in a response to the consultation. Please complete the response form that came with this letter and send it to Yvonne Draveney at Swindon Borough Council, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon SN1 1QH or call 01753 611111. The Northview School closes 30th September 2009. You can also respond online at <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/consultations/northviewaction.htm>. The Northview Action Group can be contacted by email

northview@swindon.gov.uk

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Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth
Date: 21 October 2009

CABINET

APPENDIX B

FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT

Projected Pupil Numbers for Northview Primary

Financial Yr	Pupil No.	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
2008/09	Jan-08	9	14	15	15	15	15	15	115
2010/11	Sep-09	3	5	7	7	8	10	10	60
2011/12	Sep-10	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24
2012/13	Sep-11	6	6	3	3	3	3	3	44
2013/14	Sep-12	3	6	6	6	3	3	3	30
2014/15	Sep-13	3	6	6	6	6	6	7	50

Option 1 Northview School Remains Open

Impact on Northview Primary Budget
(assumptions are that expenditure remains at current level and figures are shown at 2008/10 prices)

Financial Yr	WSPU Funding	Other Funding	Small Schools Protection	Total School Funding	Reduction in Funding	Funding per pupil	Proposed Budgeted Expenditure	Budget Deficit for Year	Cumulative Budget Deficit
2008/10	243,180	127,894	6,263	377,337		3,153	377,337	0	
2010/11	130,638	110,989	46,000	287,627	74,428	4,377	287,627	10,463	10,463
2011/12	110,398	110,291	12,300	233,008	153,911	4,329	407,448	166,739	283,202
2012/13	91,121	106,738	26,402	224,261	614	4,329	407,448	168,128	451,330
2013/14	80,997	109,942	43,844	234,783	-33	6,303	407,448	168,108	619,438
2014/15	75,183	109,394	60,106	244,683	-341	6,219	407,448	167,761	787,199

The table above shows the impact on the Northview Primary Schools budget from the reduction in pupil numbers. Small schools protection varies due to the 3 levels of protection, at less than 125 pupils, less than 61 pupils and less than 60 pupils.
The main change in the other funding column is between 2009/10 and 2010/11 this is when the flat rate reduces by around £10k due to the drop in pupil numbers to a lower band for flat rate.
Budgeted net expenditure is based on the 2009/10 level of expenditure. There is an increase in 2010/11 and 2011/12 due to the roll forward balances being used up.

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

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Option 2 - Close Northview School but building remains in use and school becomes split site with Westrop

Savings from closing Northview School			Additional Funding for Westrop Split Site					Capital Costs			
Financial Yr	Small Schools Protection	Total Savings	Additional Flat Rate	Split Site Allowance	Cost of Redundancy	Waiting Bus costs	Total Additional Funding	Net Cost/ Savings	Cost of one off highway works #	Total Net Cost/ Savings	Cumulative Net Costs/ Savings
2010/11	-58,602	-48,020	-58,387	22,827	21,117	10,000	122,311	15,889	159,000	134,889	124,889
2011/12	-58,602	-12,527	8,557	38,528	0	10,000	87,085	-14,044		-14,044	120,845
2012/13	-58,602	-33,485	8,557	18,053	0	0	24,610	67,385		67,385	53,160
2013/14	-58,602	-43,944	8,557	0	0	0	8,557	-93,889		-93,889	-40,640
2014/15	-58,602	-60,156	8,557	0	0	0	8,557	-100,192		-100,192	-140,792

*Westrop would receive the flat rate from Northview for the first financial year

This model assumes that the split site arrangement operates from September 2010 until August 2012.

One off Highway works are follows:

- > £85,000 for a puffin crossing
- > £18,000 for a new mini roundabout at junction of St Michaels Avenue and Newburgh Place
- > £8,000 for an appropriate TPO to manage possible parking pressures outside Westrop Primary School

All possible costs identified at this stage in the process have been included in the figures above. This includes costs for redundancies and all potential highways costs. Not all of these costs will necessarily materialise therefore it is possible that the savings could be greater than anticipated above.

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

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Date: 21 October 2009

**APPENDIX 9
RESPONSES TO KEY POINTS RAISED IN CONSULTATION**

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
<p>Forecast pupil numbers for Highworth may be incorrect and numbers could increase again in the future, so that closing Northview could prove a mistake.</p>	<p>The forecast pupil numbers are set out in Appendix 1. The forecasting methodology used is nationally recognised and has recently been externally reviewed and found to be robust. At present, all the indications are that pupil numbers will continue to decline in the longer-term. However, it is recognised that there are forecasts and, at some point in the future, the position could change. However, Northview has an increasing level of surplus capacity, with over 80% predicted in a few years. It is considered that the LA needs to act to address this.</p>
<p>Concerns about the safety of pupils and parents in crossing the A351 and an increase in travelling to school by car</p>	<p>These are very important issues and are particularly relevant as Northview is classified by the DCSF as a "rural" school. The points raised are addressed in the report under paragraph 3.7(b) and in Appendix 3/Annex 1. The report sets out a number of issues and concerns about road safety/traffic issues and measures that could potentially be taken to help mitigate the risks. The main concern is about crossing the A351 Lechlade road and whether crossing facilities could be upgraded. The closure of Northview would be expected to lead to more pupils being driven to school, although the forecast number of pupils is set to decline. This effect may also be mitigated if the Northview site was used as a split-site for a limited period (see paragraph 3.7(e)(iii)).</p>

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

SECTION 7.2

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places In Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
The case for closing Northview Primary School does not clearly demonstrate value for money and has not been properly costed.	<p>This point is addressed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In paragraph 3.7(c)• In particular, in Appendix 8• In the Financial Implications and Procurement section of the report• In Appendix 4 – the consultation document <p>As will be seen in Appendix 8, if Northview remains open (Option 1), it is predicted that there will be an accumulating deficit, based on forecast pupil numbers. On the other hand, the other three options show that the closure of Northview and expansion of Westrop would generate savings over the coming years. It should also be noted that the forecast funding per pupil at Northview would be over double the Swindon average by 2013/14.</p>
The pupil numbers at Northview could increase if there was strong leadership. The reason numbers have been falling is the previous School leadership and rumours of closure. There are good standards at the School.	<p>There is an underlying fall in primary pupil numbers in Highworth, as shown in Appendix 1. However, it is also clear that Northview has been, so far, hit much harder than the other Primary schools. Parents have expressed the strong view that this was due to the previous leadership in the School. They consider that, with strong leadership in the future, it is possible that pupil numbers could increase from their present levels. However, there is, as mentioned above, an underlying downward trend in Highworth and there are currently only around 70 pupils in Northview, predominantly in the upper Year groups. At present, numbers</p>

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SECTION 7.2

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
	are forecast to decline in the School. In addition, there are four forms of entry available in Highworth Primary schools at present but the forecasts show that less than three forms of entry will be needed. Finally, in relation to standards, the May 2009 Cabinet report made it clear that this issue is not about standards at Northview and Westrop but is about falling pupil numbers in the Highworth area and at Northview in particular.
Concerns raised about the future of the Northview building/site were the School to be closed and whether it would be redeveloped for housing	Cabinet has, so far, not indicated a future use for the Northview building/site were the School to be closed. The main reason for this is that it is important that possible closure of the School is not seen in any way to be predetermined. There are currently no plans to dispose of the site for housing development and, in any event, there are very strict Government regulations around the disposal of school playing fields. Cabinet may wish to consider a future community use for the site but, in the interim, whether it could be used as a split-site for Westrop Primary School (see paragraph 3.7(e)(ii) of the report). From a security point of view, it would be important that the building was not left empty for any significant period of time. Finally, as will be seen from the section on Financial and Procurement Implications, the outstanding maintenance costs for both Schools are similar, although neither has much in the way of higher priority (1 and 2) work outstanding.

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

SECTION 7.2

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
	<p>are forecast to decline in the School. In addition, there are four forms of entry available in Highworth Primary schools at present but the forecasts show that less than three forms of entry will be needed. Finally, in relation to standards, the May 2009 Cabinet report made it clear that this issue is not about standards at Northview and Westrop but is about falling pupil numbers in the Highworth area and at Northview in particular.</p>
<p>Concerns raised about the future of the Northview building/site were the School to be closed and whether it would be redeveloped for housing</p>	<p>Cabinet has, so far, not indicated a future use for the Northview building/site were the School to be closed. The main reason for this is that it is important that possible closure of the School is not seen in any way to be predetermined. There are currently no plans to dispose of the site for housing development and, in any event, there are very strict Government regulations around the disposal of school playing fields. Cabinet may wish to consider a future community use for the site but, in the interim, whether it could be used as a split-site for Westrop Primary School (see paragraph 3.7(e)(ii) of the report). From a security point of view, it would be important that the building was not left empty for any significant period of time. Finally, as will be seen from the section on Financial and Procurement Implications, the outstanding maintenance costs for both Schools are similar, although neither has much in the way of higher priority (1 and 2) work outstanding.</p>

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET**Date: 21 October 2009**

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
The expansion of Westrop Primary School could lead to larger class size and mixed-aged classes if additional funding is not provided.	This concern has been raised by parents, the Governing Bodies and Head Teachers and is fully understood. It would, of course, be for the Head Teacher and Governors of Westrop to organise classes in the most appropriate way, within the funding available. Funding to schools is allocated by a formula agreed through the Schools Forum and this has to be adhered to. Work is, nevertheless, being undertaken to identify funding that would be made available to an expanded Westrop Primary School to enable the School to get off to the best start. For the first financial year Westrop would receive the full flat rate amount that would have been allocated to Northview. This equates to an additional £68k that would be allocated through the formula.
Concern whether there would be sufficient space within the accommodation at Westrop Primary School for additional pupils	The Westrop site has been assessed using the DCSF guidance and is able to accommodate up to an additional 1/2 form of entry, using the existing School infrastructure. As referred to in the report, to provide extra classroom space initially, there are two options: to install a double mobile on the Westrop site or to use the Northview site for an interim period. Details are set out in paragraph 3.7(e)(ii) and Appendix 8, in particular. It should also be noted that forecast pupil numbers are declining and Westrop could revert to a one form of entry School within a few years.

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

SECTION 7.2

Outcome of Pre-consultation Consultation on:

School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2008

Key Points Raised	Officers' Response
There would be an increase in traffic/ parking problems around Westrop Primary School when the School opened and closed each day.	This is an understandable concern and is referred to in paragraph 3.7(b) of the report. There are additional parking places provided as part of the new build but the adjoining public car park does become very congested at peak times. Some of these problems can help to be addressed by the School's Travel Plan and the measures referred to in the report. They could also be eased were the Northview site to be used for an interim period, were this considered viable.
Concerns about the risk of loss of jobs at Northview if it closes.	These concerns are fully understood and it is a very uncertain time for everyone connected with the School, including support and teaching staff. As set out in the Staffing Implications section of the report, staff at Northview would be at risk of redundancy were the decision taken to close the School. However, the LA would do everything possible to "redeploy" staff to other schools in Highworth, although it is accepted this could be in schools outside the area. The LA does have a good track record of avoiding redundancies in relation to school reorganisations and the HR Team is providing support to staff and will continue to treat this as a high priority.

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

APPENDIX 10**INITIAL DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM**

Function/Policy: Outcome of pre-statutory consultation on school places in Highworth

1.1 Setting up responsibilities

a) Which Directorate is responsible for the function policy?	Children Services
b) Names and contact details of officers carrying out the assessment	
Ian Bickerton Tel: 465724 Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk	
c) Function/policy being assessed	
Is this function/policy new/proposed? N/A When was the function/policy introduced? N/A Date of last Impact Assessment? N/A	
d) Please identify which equality group(s) you are focusing this assessment on.	
Age, disability, gender, race, religion & belief and sexual orientation	

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

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

1.2 Function/Policy Description

a) Please provide a brief description of the function/ policy that is being assessed, including its aims and objectives.

1. It is proposed to close Northview Primary School in Highworth and expand Westrop Primary School nearby. The basic reason for this is the reducing pupil numbers in Northview Primary School and in Highworth as a whole. This trend is forecast to continue for the foreseeable future. This approach fits with the Council's overall policy on school organisation and addressing increasing numbers of surplus places, as set out in the School Organisation Plan, Primary Capital Strategy and elsewhere.
2. The main stakeholders are children, parents, Governors, the school community and the local community as a whole.
3. 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%, whilst Westrop Primary School has a lower figure of 8.7%. The indices of multiple deprivation scores calculated using individual postcode data taken from the 2009 Schools 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.
4. As indicated, the overall aim of the policy is to address falling pupil numbers. Although this proposal would include the closure of a primary school, it would also involve the expansion of another, which would aim to benefit the local community with increased resources and capacity. However, parents at Northview Primary School are strongly opposed to its closure.

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET

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b) What opportunities does this function/policy offer to promote equal opportunities?

There will be a full consultation process undertaken with all key stakeholders, including the wider local community. Everyone will have the opportunity, therefore, to put forward comments and views about the proposal. There will also be the opportunity for parents to express their opinions at the October 2009 meeting of Cabinet, when the results of the "pre-statutory" consultation are reported. Cabinet will then need to decide whether they wish to pursue this proposal or to take it to the next stage, which involves a further consultation period ("statutory" consultation). Following this, there will then be the opportunity again for people to make their views known at a meeting of the Cabinet Panel (likely to be December 2009/January 2010), when the final decision will be made. Every effort will be made, therefore, to ensure that there is fairness in the processes involved and that both the School and wider local community have the opportunity to express their opinions.

c) What issues may prevent this function/policy from promoting equal opportunities?

The aim of the "pre-statutory" consultation will be to seek views as inclusively as possible from the School community, the wider local community and other individuals/groups who may have an interest in the proposals. The consultation will need to ensure that it reaches as many groups and organisations as possible, including any specific equality groups operating within the Highworth area or who have a remit for that area.

The Primary schools in Highworth are designated as "rural" schools by the DCSF and, as such, there are particular issues that must be addressed before any decisions are taken. One of these is "impact on the local community". It is, therefore, essential that, if and when the Cabinet Panel considers this proposal, the impact on the local community and community cohesion can be seen to have been addressed as far as possible during the consultation process. Normally with school organisation proposals, it is primarily the school community that is consulted. However, in this particular case, the consultation will also be aimed at the wider local community, so that local residents and others have the opportunity to put forward their views.

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET**Date: 21 October 2009****1.3 Consider the existing evidence**

Is there any evidence of different levels of take-up, outcomes or satisfaction levels for any of the equalities groups and, if so, what?

The local school community of Northview Primary School is very concerned about the possible closure of the School and these views have been expressed in discussions held to date and publicity in the local paper, for example. However, the other local schools in the area (at least, the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies at this stage) have generally been supportive of what is proposed.

If this proposal is eventually agreed, it is not expected that there will be specific issues for any particular equality group. However, it remains possible that there could be some indirect implications for a specific group or sub-group. Of more direct relevance is the impact that the proposal could have on the local community around Northview Primary School with the potential loss of a focal point within that community. If this proposal were to proceed, every effort would be made to address issues that arose and two particular strategies would help in this respect, as follows:

~ Developing Westrop Primary School as a focal point within the wider local community, particularly with the current development of a Children's Centre and relocated pre-school playgroup. Westrop Primary School would be able to provide an opportunity to develop links with the wider community and specifically with a broader range of extended school opportunities. The Children's Centre will be able to offer the following services:

- > Jobs and Benefits advice and childminding training
- > Family and parenting support
- > Child and family health services
- > Early Years education provided by the voluntary sector in partnership with the School
- > The potential use of Northview Primary School for a community facility (yet to be decided), which would have a positive impact on the local community and community cohesion in the longer-term.

**Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on
School Places in Highworth**

CABINET**Date: 21 October 2009****1.4 Assessment of impact**

Is there an adverse impact on any of the equality groups?

- It has not so far been identified that there will be a direct or indirect adverse impact specifically on the equality groups listed. However, as demonstrated in this assessment, it is fully recognised there would be an impact on the overall community, including the local school communities of Westrop Primary and Northview Primary. Although, therefore, there would be an impact on the Northview community were this proposal to proceed, it would be a clear aim to continue to develop an expanded Westrop Primary School to the benefit of the wider community, particularly through the Extended Schools agenda. The recent opening of a new Children's Centre and replacement Pre-school Playgroup on the Westrop site will help significantly.
- However, the position will be closely monitored throughout to identify whether there is any noticeable impact on any of the equality groups identified and, if so, this will be picked up in any full Diversity Impact Assessment.

1.5 Corrective action

Are you able to put in place any corrective action(s), ie, changes or practical measures that would help overcome the adverse outcomes identified above?

The consultation and communication approaches to this proposal are being continually reviewed. The consultation process is largely set down by DCSF regulation, as there needs to be a "pre-statutory" consultation for at least six weeks, followed by (if agreed) a statutory consultation for a further six weeks. At the end of this process, a final decision will need to be made by a Panel of Cabinet. There will, therefore, be numerous opportunities for key stakeholders and the local community generally to put forward their views, both directly and indirectly. Unlike most other school reorganisation proposals, there will be a specific consultation event for the wider local community, involving two days of drop-in sessions in early September 2009. In addition, the communications methods being used and the quality of material will be kept under regular review and close links have been established, for example, with Corporate Communications for their input.

SECTION 7.2

Outcome of Pre-Statutory Consultation on School Places in Highworth

CABINET

Date: 21 October 2009

1.6 Completing the Initial Diversity Impact Assessment Summary of corrective actions to be taken

<u>Action</u>	<u>Completed</u>
Reminder to be sent to all residents in Highworth regarding the drop-in sessions for the local community in September (proposed at one of the Northview parents' consultation meetings)	By late August 2009
Will be broad outline of key issues in the above letter to the local community, eg, traffic, travel to school (again, proposed by parents by one of the Northview Primary School consultation meetings)	Late August 2009
Detailed financial and VFM assessment of this proposal to be included in report to Cabinet in October 2009 – in conjunction with Finance Directorate	September 2009

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