

This is a public consultation on the need to reduce the number of primary school places in Potters Bar. The consultation period runs from the 5 May to the 27 July 2006.

During this period of consultation there will be public meetings to discuss the proposals as follows:

Date	Venue	Time
Monday, 22 May	Sunny Bank School	7-9 pm
Tuesday, 23 May	Sunny Bank School	7-9 pm
Wednesday, 24 May	Oakmere School	7-9 pm
Monday, 5 June	Cranborne School	7-9 pm
Wednesday, 7 June	Oakmere School	7-9 pm

These meetings will be of a size that will allow everyone the opportunity to express their views. **If you wish to attend one of these meetings you will need to register a place by calling 01438 737350.** This line will be open Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, and Saturday, 9am to 4 pm, from Friday, 5 May until Friday, 19 May. (Please note that this is a booking line only and staff will be unable to discuss any matters relating to the review). Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Limited crèche facilities will be available for children aged between 2 and 11 years. Places should be booked on the same telephone number.

You can let us know your views by:

- Completing and returning the response form at the back of this booklet
- Completing the online form on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/csfconsultations
- Writing to us (freepost) if you do not want to use the form, to:

Potters Bar Consultation
CSF School Access
Freepost HJ71
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Hertford SG13 8YD

- Emailing us at education.planning@hertsc.gov.uk

However you choose to respond, please let us know if you have other suggestions or options.

Please ensure that your response is received by the 27 July 2006 (the end of the consultation period).

This document is being widely distributed within the Potters Bar area.

If you would like more copies, please ring **01992 555845**, or you can view it online at www.hertsdirect.org/csfconsultations

Why do we need to look at the number of primary school places in Potters Bar?

The birth rate has declined, which means that fewer school places are needed. There are already surplus school places in Potters Bar and this level of surplus is forecast to increase.

Taking into account new housing that is currently planned, our pupil forecast shows that the number of children needing a place in reception classes will continue to reduce over the next 6 years. If no action is taken, the surplus of primary school places in Potters Bar will increase to about 40% in reception, by the year 2012.

Falling pupil numbers can affect a school's ability to deliver effective education to its children. Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school. If a school has falling numbers, the income decreases but many of the running costs, such as premises costs, do not reduce. Therefore, the management of the school can become very difficult, particularly maintaining high quality provision on a reducing budget, retaining and recruiting staff and having to re-organise classes on a regular basis as numbers fall. This can cause instability and affect pupils' achievement.

Providing a better match between the number of pupils and the number of places will reduce the risk of schools being adversely affected by falling pupil numbers. When undertaking a review in an urban area with reducing pupil numbers, ideally any changes proposed should produce schools not less than 2 Forms of Entry (FE), which is the same as 60 places per year group. This is because, in the long term, the County Council sees 2 FE schools as being more sustainable in a falling numbers situation.

However, alternatives may need to be considered according to the local situation. For instance, there may be circumstances where reducing larger schools would ensure an appropriate number and geographical spread of school places.

Given the current and expected pupil numbers at reception, the number of school places in Potters Bar needs to be reduced by 90 per year group, which is the same as 3 Forms of Entry (FE).



What has happened so far?

We have worked with schools and other community representatives to establish an understanding of the issues relating to the area as a whole and those specific to individual schools. This background information and local input helped to produce a long list of possible options. Each of these options was examined against the following criteria:

- to reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand
- to enhance capacity to raise educational standards; reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness, and offer extended schools
- to have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact and cost
- to have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils.

(Details of all the options which were considered and discounted can be found in the Appendix)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families considered all this information and, following discussions with key elected members of the County Council, decided which options to bring forward for public consultation.

What are the County Council's proposals?

As the next step in this process, the County Council is now consulting you on the following three proposals.

- Note:**
- 1 FE (Form of Entry) = 30 places per year group
 - 2 FE = 60 places per year group
 - 3 FE = 90 places per year group

Option 1 (the County Council's preferred option)

Close Sunny Bank School and reduce Oakmere School from 2 FE to 1 FE

Option 2

Close Oakmere School and reduce Sunny Bank School from 2 FE to 1 FE

Option 3

Close Sunny Bank and Oakmere Schools, and expand Cranborne School to 3 FE

Options 1 and 2 would be implemented from September 2007. Option 3 would be implemented from September 2008.

These are only proposals and no decisions have yet been taken.

The feedback from this consultation will be carefully considered before any decisions are made.

(Please note that the following schools are not directly affected by any of these proposals: Ladbroke, Little Heath, Pope Paul RC, St Giles CofE, and The Wroxham)

Reasons for the choice of proposals for consultation

Option 1: the Council's preferred option.

Close Sunny Bank School and reduce Oakmere School from 2 FE to 1 FE

- It reduces school places in the area by 3 FE, leaving between 10% and 11% surplus places in Potters Bar.
- It retains Oakmere School in the east of Potters Bar. According to the Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, this area includes the largest affected part of the town.
- Because Sunny Bank is the school with the fewest pupils, this option would involve the smallest number of children transferring, and they could all transfer together to Cranborne School.

Option 2:

Close Oakmere School and reduce Sunny Bank School from 2 FE to 1 FE

- It reduces school places in the area by 3 FE, leaving between 10% and 11% surplus places.
- It retains Sunny Bank School in the south of Potters Bar. According to the Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, this area includes a smaller affected area than in the east of the town.
- Oakmere has more pupils than Sunny Bank. There would be too many pupils for them all to transfer to either Cranborne or Sunny Bank. Therefore, year groups would have to be split between the two schools.

Option 3:

Close Sunny Bank and Oakmere Schools, and expand Cranborne School to 3 FE

- It reduces school places in the area by 3 FE, leaving between 10% and 11% surplus places.
- It retains places in the centre of Potters Bar. However, it removes places from the east and south of the town.
- The Cranborne building is relatively new and the site has capacity, together with adjoining land in County Council ownership, to accommodate 3 FE.
- Because of the need for significant building work this proposal could not be implemented until September 2008



What would this mean for pupils at the schools affected?

Transition arrangements

In all three proposals children currently attending the schools which may close as a result of this consultation (Sunny Bank and/or Oakmere) would be offered places in alternative schools, as follows.

Option 1:

- From September 2007, Sunny Bank School pupils would be offered places at Cranborne School. Depending on how many pupils transferred, mobile accommodation might be provided to help with the temporary transitional arrangements. Alternatively, if parents wished, they could apply to any other school with a place available at that time.
- Oakmere School pupils would remain at the school, and a staged approach used gradually to reduce the school from 2 FE to 1.

Option 2:

- Oakmere School has a larger number of pupils than Sunny Bank, and there would be too many to transfer together to one school - either Sunny Bank or Cranborne. There would be sufficient places across both schools, therefore parents of Oakmere pupils would be asked to express a preference, the admissions rules would be applied and places then allocated for September 2007.

Option 3:

- Oakmere and Sunny Bank Schools would close on 31 August 2008. Cranborne would expand to 3FE from September 2008 and pupils from the closing schools would be offered places there. Alternatively, if parents wished, they could apply to any other school with a place available at that time.

What about school uniforms?

Any parent who accepts the alternative school place offered as a result of a school closure, would receive a financial contribution towards the cost of a new uniform. More information will be available should the decision to close a school be taken.

What about transport?

If accepting the alternative school place offered as a result of a school closure means a pupil has to travel more than two miles in each direction (up to age 8 years) or more than three miles in each direction (age 8 years and over), the County Council would provide free transport. More information will be available should the decision to close a school be taken.

What would happen to the staff?

If, as a result of this consultation, the decision is taken to close a school or schools, then all staff at the school(s) concerned will be at risk. The County Council would work closely with staff at risk to redeploy them into other schools.

How would all this be paid for?

Any capital cost associated with these proposals would be met from the sale of County Council owned sites, supplemented if necessary from the County Council's own financial resources.

How will this consultation work?

There will be a series of meetings at the schools concerned which will be run by an independent facilitator. The meetings will be of an appropriate size so that all views can be heard and considered, both at the meetings and subsequently by the decision-makers. For the dates and times of these meetings, please see page 2 of this booklet.

In addition, there is a response form for your views at the end of this booklet and on our website. All responses will be reported and made available to the decision-makers.

How will the decision be taken and when?

The consultation ends on 27 July 2006. In September, the County Council's Cabinet will decide how to proceed following feedback from the consultation.

If Cabinet decides to proceed with any of the proposals from this consultation, the County Council will publish a statutory notice(s) of its intention in October 2006. Anybody is entitled to comment or object during the 6 week notice period.

If there are any objections to a notice, the decision as to whether or not the proposal(s) can proceed would be made by the independent School Organisation Committee.

Process	Date(s)
Public Consultation	5 May to 27 July 2006
Education Panel*	12 September
Cabinet*	16 October
Statutory Notices	October to December
Decision by School Organisation Committee*	December

* These meetings will be open to the public.

Appendix

Options considered and discounted

Option A

- Close Sunny Bank and Oakmere and expand Ladbrooke to 2 FE

Reason:

- The total site area of Ladbrooke does not allow for more than 1.6 FE, which would be insufficient to accommodate pupils from all 3 schools.

Option B

- Reduce Cranborne, Oakmere and Sunny Bank from 2 FE to 1 FE

Reason:

- This option would leave three schools with an increasing amount of spare building capacity without reducing environmental impact, as energy and maintenance costs would remain much the same. It would result in a spread of schools at 1 FE which would be competing for a reducing number of pupils at reception. Cranborne is one of the newest school buildings in the county.

Option C

- Amalgamate Sunny Bank and Cranborne on the Sunny Bank site; and amalgamate Ladbrooke and Oakmere on the Oakmere site

Reason:

- This option would close the two newest school buildings and leave no community school to serve the centre of the town.

Option D

- Amalgamate Sunny Bank, Oakmere and Ladbrooke on either the Sunny Bank or the Oakmere site and expand to 3 FE.

Reason:

- This only removes 2 FE and would close the newest school building.

Option E

- Close Wroxham, Ladbrooke and Little Heath Schools

Reason:

- This would close three schools with high levels of parental preference and reduce provision in the centre and the north of the town. It would close the newest school building, and would disrupt a larger number of pupils than the three proposals being consulted upon.

Option F

- Close Sunny Bank, amalgamate Oakmere and Ladbrooke on the Oakmere site

Reason:

- This option closes the newest school building in the area. There would be insufficient space to incorporate pupils from all three schools at Oakmere. Therefore, Sunny Bank pupils would need to transfer to Cranborne School, which would mean both Cranborne and Oakmere Schools having numbers above 2 FE.