

<p><b>Disruption for pupils:</b> school closures can be traumatic for children.</p>	<p>School closures inevitably mean a degree of disruption but officers of the Council Council are experienced at working with staff and governors of closing schools to manage transitional arrangements carefully for both staff and pupils. Regular support meetings will be held with the affected schools. Careful consideration would be given to any vulnerable children, or those with special circumstances or Special Education Needs.</p>
<p><b>The nature of the consultation:</b> A proposal to close both schools was not considered at either the early stage of stakeholder discussions nor put to public consultation.</p> <p>Consideration was not given to the impact on other areas</p>	<p>The purpose of early discussion with stakeholders is to enable them to influence the options to be considered by the Director of CSF when deciding options to put to public consultation. The amalgamation proposal made by the Lannock Governors did not emerge at the time of the discussion with stakeholders.</p> <p>The suggestion for the ‘amalgamation’ option was discussed in public meetings and fully reported to Cabinet. Representation was also made at the Cabinet meeting. The option was not pursued by Cabinet.</p>
<p><b>Cost information was misleading:</b> the Governors’ consider the current Lannock building suitable for a 1 f.e. school and feel that is consistent with early technical advice provided to the LA which was not subsequently used.</p>	<p>Information about the feasibility of school premises is made on an incremental basis, following more detailed stages of investigation by technical advisers.</p> <p>The financial information presented to members was a result of the outcome of that work. The concluding advice received and reported was that work would be required to both buildings on the Lannock campus in order to facilitate the proposal.</p>
<p><b>Officers misunderstood the Lannock Governors’ point</b> of seeking an amalgamation of the two schools in order to change ethos.</p>	<p>The Governors’ representations about amalgamation were clear to officers and reported and represented to members. Officers advised the Panel that in the event of a new school proposal the Local Authority would be required to determine the site to be used and the Radburn site would be recommended.</p>

Issues	Comments
<p><b>Westbury is an inclusive school with small classes and good facilities:</b> it provides a good standard of education and has a strong community ethos in an area that lacks amenities, so should not close.</p>	<p>The closure proposal for Westbury is not based upon the quality of provision at the school but on surplus places.</p>
<p><b>Disruption to students and staff:</b> pupils' education will be disrupted by the closure of Westbury.</p> <p>The management of Westbury will become increasingly difficult.</p> <p>The receiving schools' accommodation is not adequate/suitable</p>	<p>There is no easy way to close a school, especially one that is well regarded. The proposal clarifies the transition arrangements.</p> <p>Officers of the County Council are experienced at working with staff and governors of closing schools to carefully manage transitional arrangements for both staff and pupils. Regular support meetings will be held with the affected schools. Careful consideration would be given to any vulnerable children, or those with special circumstances or Special Education Needs.</p> <p>Additional temporary accommodation and adaptations will be provided as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Impact on community:</b> The area around Westbury School is a relatively deprived community and the school acts as a focal point and resource centre. The children's centre needs to be with a school.</p>	<p>A children's centre will be created on the Westbury site and this will be linked to accommodation for a third party provider to continue to offer a pre-school should the school close. Children's centres can be developed in a number of ways: eg new provision in purpose built centres; extending school or community provision; extending local authority facilities or voluntary sector pre-school provision or bring together existing provision using resources which already exist in an area and combining these.</p>
<p><b>Demography:</b> there will be insufficient primary school places in Letchworth.</p> <p>Westbury's reception class is not the smallest in Letchworth.</p> <p>Reduction of parental choice in Letchworth.</p>	<p>There are currently 26% surplus reception places across Letchworth. Taking account of demography and the predicted demand generated from new housing developments, the level of anticipated surplus is forecast to be 29% at reception by 2013/14.</p> <p>While the reception class at Westbury is not currently the smallest, the overall level of surplus places at the school is over 40 %. The guidance states that the Decision Maker should normally approve proposals to close schools in order to remove surplus places</p>

	<p>where the school proposed for closure has a quarter or more places unfilled.</p> <p>Closing a school inevitably reduces the number of schools for which parents can express a preference. However, the proposals would leave a pattern of primary schools as well as separate infant and junior schools.</p>
<p><b>Size of classes and SEN:</b> Westbury’s small class sizes allows it to provide better than a larger school for all its children, especially those with SEN.</p>	<p>Class sizes are not dependent on the size of the school. Icknield and Wilbury Schools have comparable expertise in SEN and both schools are already working well with a similar number of children with similar needs to those at Westbury School, although the percentage of SEN is higher at Westbury. Careful transition plans will be made (if a decision to close the school is made) and information shared with the schools to which the children would transfer. Additional staff are likely to be required at these schools and it is possible that some Westbury staff could be redeployed at the receiving schools, providing continuity of pupil/staff relationships. Funding for SEN follows the child and all children with special needs will receive continuing support from their receiving school.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility:</b> It will be difficult for parents to get their children to different schools further from home. It will add to traffic congestion.</p>	<p>Many local children already attend schools off the estate. Both receiving schools are within walking distance. (The average distance for Westbury pupils from home to Icknield or Wilbury School is likely to be 0.63 miles and 0.74 miles respectively). Traffic consultants have considered pedestrian access and safe walking routes from the Westbury estate to Icknield and Wilbury Schools and have suggested a range of improvement measures, which we will be carrying out.</p>
<p><b>Inadequate consultation:</b> Not all options were consulted on; the consultation was flawed; questions were not answered; the decision was based on inaccurate data; the Education Panel’s recommendation was overturned and the appeal process is flawed.</p>	<p>The proposals consulted upon were the result of detailed consideration. Public consultation was carried out according to the LA’s published protocol which ensured that all responses were made available to Members as well as summarised in a report to Cabinet. Members were provided with accurate data, including the number of applications via the County Council’s admissions process and the number of pupils taking up a place. The Education Panel makes recommendations to Cabinet which is not required to accept those recommendations. The process of considering objections to the statutory notices and making subsequent decisions is set down in legislation and will be followed.</p>