

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 15 MARCH 2004 AT 2.00 P.M.**

<u>Agenda Item</u> <u>No.</u>

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF FIVE OAKS PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL AND HAZELGROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HATFIELD, AND THE OPENING OF A NEW TWO FORMS OF ENTRY SCHOOL ON THE FIVE OAKS SITE.

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member: - Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to close both Five Oaks Primary and Nursery School and Hazelgrove Primary School, and to recommend the opening of a new 2FE school on the Five Oaks site in September 2004, but with transitional arrangements for the autumn term 2004.
- 1.2 To ask Cabinet to decide whether or not to publish statutory notices relating to this proposal. The outcome of the Panel discussion will be reported verbally as the agenda will have gone out before this meeting takes place.

2. Summary

- 2.1. On 16th January 2004 a public consultation document was issued after Five Oaks was placed in special measures.
- 2.2. The proposal takes into account the wider surplus place position and pupil attainment in South Hatfield. Accordingly the proposal relates to the two schools serving this part of Hatfield, Five Oaks and Hazelgrove.
- 2.3. The current Five Oaks School site is the preferred site for the new school as it is large enough for the new 2FE primary school. Building improvements will be forward funded from primary modernisation funding against the eventual disposal of the Hazelgrove site.
- 2.4. Overall, responses to the public consultation have been negative. Key concerns relate to the time-scale for implementation.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. Cabinet is invited to consider whether or not statutory notices should be published to effect the proposal. Key issues for consideration are:
- time-scale for implementation
 - building options and resultant capital cost
 - early years options.

4. Background

- 4.1. The consultation document is attached to this report (Appendix 1). The consultation period has included meetings with Heads, staff, members of the governing bodies and public meetings at both schools.
- 4.2. Pupil forecast figures for schools in Hatfield are attached to this report (Appendix 2). The need to review surplus primary school places in Hatfield is set out in the current Hertfordshire School Organisation Plan. It is intended this review will begin in Autumn 2005 and it is expected that between 3-4 FE will need to be removed as a result. This proposal would not prejudice that review.
- 4.3. The table below sets out the year group breakdown at both Five Oaks and Hazelgrove in September 2004. It shows there will be approximately 2 FE in the two schools. This level of demand is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. In September 2004 it would be possible to organise pupils into class groups of no more than 30.

Numbers based on September 2004 (excludes nursery)

School Name	Recep	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total
Five Oaks	23	33	33	28	28	33	42	220
Hazelgrove	17	26	22	21	27	26	18	157
Proposed new school.	40	59	55	49	55	59	60	377

- 4.4 Five Oaks is a school identified by Ofsted as requiring “special measures”, whilst Hazelgrove is on the Hertfordshire “schools causing concern” list. The table below sets out the results in South Hatfield. It can be seen that KS2 results at Five Oaks are closer to, or above, the Hertfordshire and national averages while those at Hazelgrove are below those at Five Oaks and both the Hertfordshire and national averages.

**Results in South Hatfield
(% of Pupils at Key Stage 2, Level 4 or above 2003)**

School Name	English	Maths	Science
Five Oaks	74	63	91
Hazelgrove	50	34	66
Hertfordshire	80	76	89
National	75	73	87

4.5 Early Years: there are approximately 80 early years places (for 3 and 4 year olds) in South Hatfield. Analysis of early-years places demonstrates that the current level of provision matches demand both now and in the foreseeable future. Currently Five Oaks provides 35 nursery places with 48 being provided by a private provider at Hazelgrove. There are three main options for the delivery of early-years places which are set out in section 6 of this report.

4.6 The proposal would ensure the educational and financial viability of the new school and provide an opportunity, with the on-going support of the School Standards and Curriculum Division, to raise pupil attainment.

5. Results of Consultation

5.1 In total there were 300 responses to the consultation. Responses from Headteachers and Governors are shown at Appendix 3 to this report. In summary:

Question	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Left Blank	Total
Do you consider that the County Council should consider the future of the two schools?	51 [17%]	235 [78.33%]	13 [4.33%]	1 [0.33%]	300
Do you agree with the proposal to close Five Oaks Primary School?	62 [20.66%]	196 [65.33%]	41 [13.66%]	1 [0.33%]	300
Do you agree with the proposal to close Hazelgrove Primary School?	28 [9.33%]	261 [87%]	10 [3.33%]	1 [0.33%]	300
Do you agree with the proposal to open a new 2FE Primary School on the Five Oaks site?	32 [10.66%]	254 [84.66%]	12 [4%]	2 [0.66%]	300

Other responses received separately (copies in Members room):

- 84 letters entitled 'We can stop the closure of Hazelgrove School and Nursery'
- 49 signatures on a petition entitled 'Please save Hazelgrove School Nursery and Community'
- 3111 petition against the proposal entitled 'Save Hazelgrove School and Save Our Community'

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5.2 The key themes from the consultation are set out in the following table.
There is further comment on some of these issues in section 6:

ISSUE	RESPONSE
<p>Timescale That the timescale of the proposal is too soon.</p>	<p>The LEA is under an obligation to respond promptly to a school in special measures. In any case, prompt action reduces the period of uncertainty for staff, parents and pupils.</p>
<p>Quality Concerns regarding the quality of education at Five Oaks School being in 'Special Measures' and losing this label when it becomes the new school.</p>	<p>The LEA has, and is, putting in a great deal of support and development to the Five Oaks staff and is confident that there will be a marked change by the start of the next academic year. The proposed school will be a new school, not Five Oaks, with newly appointed managers and staff team appointed from the two schools which would close.</p>
<p>That smaller schools with smaller classes (as at Hazelgrove) provide a better environment for learning.</p>	<p>The classes at the new school will not be large (all 30 and under) and in one year group will actually be smaller than currently at Hazelgrove.</p>
<p>That Hazelgrove is the better school and that Five Oaks should close, the children from Five Oaks should go to Hazelgrove Primary School.</p>	<p>The Key Stage 2 results at Hazelgrove are not as good as those at Five Oaks. There are not enough surplus places at Hazelgrove to accommodate all Five Oaks pupils.</p>
<p>That the two schools could both remain but at 1FE each.</p>	<p>This does nothing to address either the educational standards in the area or the number of surplus places.</p>
<p>Community Concern that the Hazelgrove site will be used by the University.</p>	<p>No approach has been made by the University. If Hazelgrove were declared surplus to educational requirements it would go through the standard corporate process for re-use or disposal.</p>
<p>Concern that children excluded from Five Oaks and attending Hazelgrove would be reintegrated with the children from whom they had been previously removed</p>	<p>The appropriateness of any pupil excluded from either Five Oaks or Hazelgrove attending the new school will be reviewed on a case by case basis.</p>
<p>That Hazelgrove School is needed in South Hatfield as it plays a significant part in the community.</p>	<p>It is accepted that Hazelgrove is a community resource but the needs of the school community come first. We will work with District Council to see what enhancement to other community buildings might be possible.</p>

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<p>That the new school would not be a new school. Hazelgrove parents are concerned that their children will not be accepted by existing pupils at the Five Oaks site.</p>	<p>It will be a new school with new management. That new management will have, as a priority, the integration of the two existing school communities.</p>
<p>Buildings The disruption to the education of the children and disturbance from building work.</p>	<p>There is inevitably some disruption during building work, and re-organisation of school provision more generally. A building company with specific experience of working in occupied school buildings will be used. They will also maximise the work done during half-term and the holidays periods.</p>
<p>Concern that the new school would have fewer facilities and resources than the existing schools currently have.</p>	<p>As may be seen from section 6, there will be extensive refurbishment of facilities and a small amount of new build. Designs for the new school are not finalised, however, as there is ongoing consultation with staff about this.</p>
<p>That the proposal is for financial gain and not the best interests of the children and their education.</p>	<p>The proposal is not for financial gain – indeed the County Council would be forward-funding the building work for the new school before receiving anything from the disposal of the Hazelgrove site.</p>
<p>Travel Concerns over Hazelgrove children walking to the new school. It is felt that it is too far to walk and that there are road safety implications.</p>	<p>The vast majority of children now attending Hazelgrove live within half a mile of the Five Oaks site and a significant number live nearer to Five Oaks.</p>
<p>Concerns regarding traffic and the lack of parking around the Five Oaks site.</p>	<p>Considerable traffic improvements are being carried out between now and August on the roads between Hazelgrove and Five Oaks, and in the immediate vicinity of the Five Oaks site. It is intended there will be more parking on the Five Oaks site.</p>
<p>Early Years Concerns over the future of the existing private nursery at Hazelgrove.</p>	<p>Members are being asked to consider 3 options for the delivery of early years places. Two of these involve the relocation of the private provider to the new school site.</p>
<p>Other The proposal is taking away parental choice.</p>	<p>Although there would be one fewer school to choose from, parents would still have a choice from a number of schools in Hatfield where there are places available.</p>

6. Planning issues

- 6.1 **Size of new school:** Five Oaks is currently a 2FE school (it also has a 35 place nursery class), Hazelgrove is 1FE (there is also a 48 place independent nursery). Currently both schools provide a total of 630 primary places. Pupil number forecasts demonstrate a current, medium and long-term demand in South Hatfield for approximately 400 places or 2 FE. Therefore, in order to ensure long term viability and quality the size of the new school should be 2FE.
- 6.2 **Site and Town Planning:** only the 2FE Five Oaks site is large enough to accommodate an amalgamated primary school and It is also more centrally located in South Hatfield. The Five Oaks site is therefore the preferred site for the new school.
- 6.3 There will be minimal new build for the new school. It will be possible to achieve this under permitted development and therefore planning permission will not be required.
- 6.4 Initial planning advice suggests that the built area of the Hazelgrove site would have potential for residential development. This is subject to further discussion with Welwyn and Hatfield District Council and with the DfES.
- 6.5 **Pupil travel:** approximately 80% of pupils currently attending Five Oaks and Hazelgrove live within a 0.5 mile radius of the current Five Oaks site. Indeed some current Five Oaks pupils live very close to the Hazelgrove site and already walk to school. Detailed analysis using pupil's home postcodes demonstrate, that for those living on the outer perimeter of this 0.5 mile zone, typical walking distances of 0.75 mile to the current Five Oaks site.
- 6.6 The feasibility work includes a travel and highway safety study. This work will take into account highway safety improvements in South Hatfield which are programmed for completion in August 2004.
- 6.7 **Early Years provision:** there are three options for the delivery of early years places.
- 6.8 Option A - to open the new school with a 60 - place nursery class. Notice would need to given to the existing provider at Hazelgrove to quit when the school closes.
- 6.9 Option B - to open the new school with a 60 - place nursery class. The existing provider at Hazelgrove could then be relocated to the site of the new school to provide only places for 3 year olds and extended care to older children. There would be a partnership agreement setting

out how the school and private provider would work together across the foundation stage (see 6.16 below)

- 6.10 Option C - the new school could have a 30-place nursery class with the balance of 4-year old places being delivered by way of a partnership agreement (see 6.16 below) with the existing Hazelgrove provider who would relocate to the new school site. In practice, with both the school and the private provider, there would be up to 60 places for 4 year olds, which would in turn feed into the two reception classes in the new school. The private provider would also provide some places, approximately 20, for 3 year olds.
- 6.11 For both options B and C the partnership agreement would cover issues such as quality, curriculum, and staff development and will include a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process. There would also be an option for the County Council to terminate the agreement if necessary and, for option C, to increase the number of nursery places provided by the school to 60.
- 6.12 Option A would not be appropriate, as it would seriously undermine the viability of the private/voluntary sector provider. Option C is complex and would be difficult to manage particularly in terms of admissions to the nursery class. It would also run the risk of perpetuating distinct pupil communities if Hazelgrove children continued to attend the private provision and Five Oaks children the maintained provision. Option B is therefore the recommended option as it would provide all 4 year olds with a place in the school nursery class, protect places for 3 year olds, develop more extended care and ensure the viability of the private provider.
- 6.13 **Timescale:** the Consultation Document proposes an implementation date of September 2004. This was one of the key criticisms of the proposal. Allowing an extended implementation period to January 2005, would enable more time to build community relations, provide Five Oaks with more time to emerge from special measures and provide time for the completion of a revised building programme with less disruption to pupils (see further below).
- 6.14 **Buildings:** originally built as separate, 2 FE infant and junior schools, the current Five Oaks school has capacity for 2 FE. However, in recent years as a result of its falling roll, surplus teaching accommodation has been adapted to other purposes, for example, a nursery class, library and ICT suite. Therefore, with a small extension, it is proposed to remodel and refurbish the existing accommodation in order to provide appropriate facilities for the new school.
- 6.15 This new and refurbished accommodation is likely to comprise the following:

- 1 Nursery classroom
- 6 Key Stage 1 classrooms (2 each for Reception and Years 1 and 2)
- 8 key stage 2 classrooms (2 each for Years 3, 4, 5 and 6)
- Specialist accommodation to include ICT, Library and Food Technology.
- Non teaching accommodation, to include improved office, administration and reception.

6.16 There are two buildings options which have differential costs and time-scales, one which was produced in time for the public consultation exercise and one which has had the benefit of feedback from this consultation and input from the managers and users of the existing building. It represents a considerable improvement for little extra cost and is, therefore, recommended. Although the building proposals have not been entirely finalised, and there are ongoing discussions with staff, the eventual cost will be contained within the agreed range as set out in section 7 below.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. **Revenue:** a detailed analysis of revenue costs is contained within appendix 4 of this report.
- 7.2. Under the LEA budget share arrangements for funding amalgamated schools, the new school would receive additional funding to ease the transition from two schools to one.
- 7.3. The new school would be funded as the equivalent of two schools (but on the basis of occupying only one site) for the first two years from the date of the amalgamation. In the third year, it would receive amalgamation funding of 50% of the difference between the funding of one and two schools. In the fourth and subsequent years after the date of amalgamation there would be no additional funding and the school would be funded as one school.
- 7.4. The balances, both surpluses and deficits, of the existing schools would transfer to the new primary school.
- 7.5. **Capital:** the scheme would be forward funded from primary modernisation funding against an eventual disposal. Subject to the necessary planning consent and DfES Section 77 consent, the capital receipt might be anticipated in the 2005/6 financial year.
- 7.6. Option 1 - an initial estimate of cost for this pre-consultation modest refurbishment scheme is between £1.6 - £1.8 million.
- 7.7. Option 2 - this second recommended scheme which better reflects current building standards, comments made during the consultation

period, input from managers and users of the existing building and which includes facilities already present at Five Oaks has been estimated at between £1.7 and 2.1 million.

8. Timetable

- 8.1 Option 1 may be achievable for September 2004, although it must be stressed that Mace project managers warn that this is only just achievable if work on detailed design starts straight away and is not subject to any unforeseen delays.
- 8.2 Option 2 is deliverable for January 2005, although, again, there is a warning that even this timescale is tight.
- 8.3 In order to gain the benefits of both the improved building design and the establishment of the new school at the start of an academic year, it is recommended that there should be a transitional arrangement for the autumn term 2004. This would entail the legal establishment of the new school but one that would operate on both the Five Oaks and Hazelgrove sites for that term. It would enable:
- a better design for the new school to be built
 - the building work to be completed with far less disruption to the pupils at Five Oaks who could be accommodated in the 'junior' part of the building
 - further work to be done on building links between the two school communities
 - children at Hazelgrove to be more gradually introduced to the new site and journey to school.

Background information referred to by the author

Public Consultation Document – published January 2004

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation Document

Appendix 2 – Pupil forecast figures

Appendix 3 - Consultation responses from Heads and Governors at affected schools.

Appendix 4 – Revenue finance implications