

Report to Executive Director of Children's Services for final decision on a proposal to extend the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

The Proposal

Norfolk County Council consulted on a proposal to extend the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

Our proposal was triggered by a proposal from Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT); to merge Weasenham CE Primary Academy with Brisley CE Primary Academy from 1 January 2024, resulting in the closure of Weasenham CE Primary Academy. The Secretary of State approved the DNEAT proposal on 4 December 2023 and Weasenham CE Primary Academy will close.

The DNEAT proposal to merge Weasenham CE Primary Academy would have an impact on the catchment area for children from the area, in the future. Norfolk County Council therefore undertook a consultation to change the Weasenham catchment area, proposing it was included into the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School.

The Consultation

The consultation ran from 11 September to 20 October 2023. A copy of the consultation document is available in Appendix A.

A total of 107 consultation document were sent to;

- Parents and pupils at the Great Massingham CE Primary School
- The Governors and staff at the Great Massingham CE Primary School
- Schools in the Litcham school cluster group
- Diocesan Boards of Education
- Trade Unions who represent staff at the schools
- James Wild, MP
- Local County Councillors, District Councillors and Parish Councillors

A consultation event was held on 21 September 2023. Three people attended, along with the Headteacher, Vice Chair of Governors, Diocese Director of Education, Admissions Manager NCC and School Organisation Manager NCC.

Summary Analysis

The full analysis is available in Appendix B.

There were 5 responses to the consultation. The response rate is low at 5%.

- 2 people Strongly agreed or agreed (%)
- 1 Person neither agreed or disagreed
- 2 people strongly disagreed (%) with the proposal.

Those who Strongly Agreed and Agreed with the proposal said;

- There are dwindling numbers of children throughout Norfolk due to the impact of house prices, holiday homes and elderly generations moving into the area. By moving the catchment area it allows one school at least to stay open and keep numbers up in classes.
- Want to ensure the school maintains numbers to remain open for our current children and future children in the village and wider area. The loss of a primary school to a thriving village is a huge blow.

Those who Neither Agreed or Disagreed with the proposal said;

- What other choice do we have to agree/disagree the catchment covers more of the area? That choice has already been made.

Those who Strongly Disagreed with the proposal said;

- Disagree because the closure of Weasenham School is wrong on so many levels.
- This seems like nothing more than a money saving exercise which is what happens when school are effectively privatised when they are part of academy chains. Research shows children learn better in smaller class sizes.

Conclusion

Norfolk County Council has a duty to ensure sufficient school places. This is achieved through the School's Local Growth and Investment Plan (SLGIP) for pupil place provision 4 – 16 years. This Plan was agreed by Norfolk County Council's Cabinet on 11 January 2023.

The pupil forecasts for Weasenham CE Primary Academy are low and the current parental preference for Weasenham CE Primary Academy has shown a decline.

There will be space at Great Massingham CE Primary School for pupils within the new catchment area, subject to parental preference. It is also adjacent to Weasenham CE Primary Academy catchment area.

The main areas of concern raised during the consultation relate to the closure of the school at Weasenham, provision for schools in rural areas, housing issues and pressure on facilities and capacity at Great Massingham CE Primary School.

School transport will be provided free of charge by Norfolk County Council for those pupils who transfer to their nearest or nearest catchment school, where this is beyond the qualifying distance (over 2 miles for under 8s and older children from families on low income, and over 3 miles for other older children), as set out in our Home to School & College Transport Policy.

This proposal is linked to a proposal from DNEAT to merge Weasenham CE Primary Academy with Brisley CE Primary Academy from 1 January 2024. Following a consultation on this proposal and submission of a business case, the Secretary of State on 4 December 2023 approved the decision to close Weasenham CE Primary Academy and merge the school with Brisley CE Primary Academy from 1 January 2024.

Recommendation

The Executive Director of Children's Services **agrees** that from 1 January 2024, all children from the Weasenham area will be in catchment for Great Massingham. This is due to;

- The Secretary of State's decision to close Weasenham CE Primary Academy
- Pupil forecasts for Weasenham CE Primary Academy are low and there is sufficient space at Great Massingham CE Primary School should parents prefer this school. Great Massingham currently serves the neighbouring catchment area.

Extension of the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

I agree to the extension of the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

Signed



Sara Tough
(Executive Director of Children's Services)

Dated 4 December 2023

Consultation on the extension of the catchment area for Great Massingham CE Primary School, Norfolk, from 1 January 2024

Our proposal

Norfolk County Council is proposing to extend the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

Why are we consulting on a change of catchment area?

Our proposal is linked to a proposal from DNEAT; to merge Weasenham CE Primary Academy with Brisley CE Primary Academy from 1 January 2024. This means we need to review the catchment area that was linked to Weasenham CE Primary Academy. Full details of DNEAT's proposal can be found at the bottom of the page on this link;

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/gt-massingham>

What is a catchment area

A catchment area is a defined geographical area that serves a particular school. In most cases, the area is used to provide priority for admission to a particular school. In planning the layout of a catchment area, the Admissions Authority, in this case, Norfolk County Council, should try to ensure that the parent would have reasonable expectation for priority to that school.

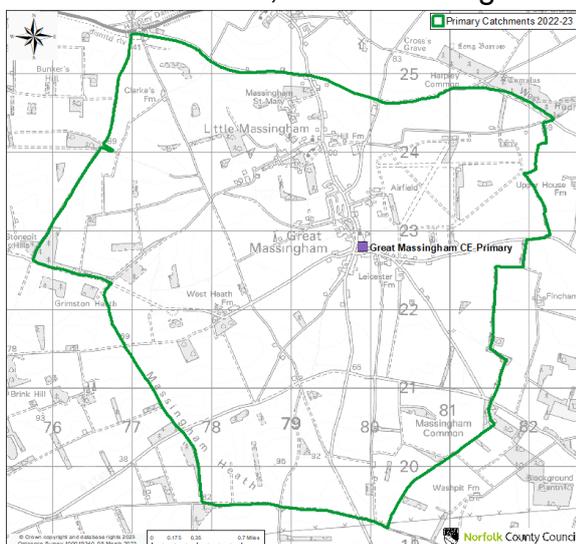
What are the proposed changes to the catchment area

The proposal to merge Weasenham CE Primary Academy has an impact on the catchment area for children from the area, in the future. Norfolk County Council is proposing to change the Weasenham catchment area, by including it into the catchment area of Great Massingham.

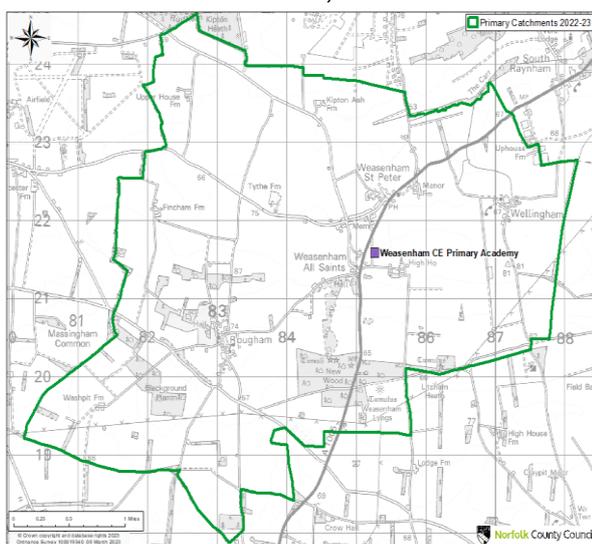
We have discussed this proposal with the headteacher and the governors at Great Massingham CE Primary School. The pupil forecasts for Weasenham are low and the Council feel there will be space at Great Massingham for pupils within the new catchment area, subject to parental preference.

Current catchment areas for Great Massingham and Weasenham

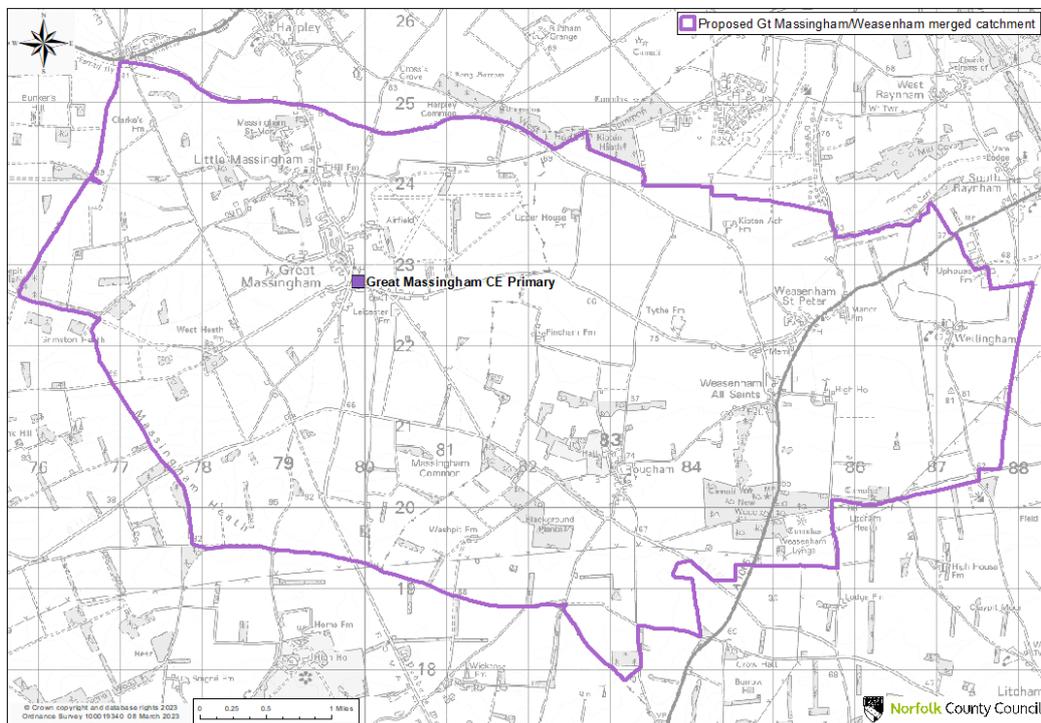
Current catchment; Great Massingham



Current catchment; Weasenham



Proposed new catchment area



How can I have my say?

Come and talk to us - There will be a meeting for parents/carers and other interested members of the community:

- Thursday 21 September, 3.40pm at Great Massingham CE Primary School

Tell us your views by;

- completing the online survey on <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/gt-massingham>
- completing the attached form and handing it into the school office
- Emailing us at schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk
- Write to School Organisation Team, FREEPOST IH 2076, Floor 8 Bay 29, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DL

What happens next

After this consultation ends on 20 October 2023, Norfolk County Council will review the results of the consultation and present the findings to the Executive Director of Children's Services who will decide whether to change the catchment area.

We need all responses by 12 noon on 20th October 2023

Consultation on extension of the catchment area for Great Massingham CE Primary School, Norfolk, from 1 January 2024

Let us know what you think of our proposal

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to extend the catchment area of Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024? Please tick a box.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree or disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree		

Why do you say this? Please write in the box below.

Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make to help us with this decision and in planning for the future provision of the children? Please write in the box below.

We would like to hear from many different people as your views help us to decide whether or not we make these changes. We will also use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our proposal to extend the catchment area of

Great Massingham CE Primary School, to include the parish of Weasenham, from 1 January 2024.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council's data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation.

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation, including any personal information. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Please tell us who you are, (tick all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil | <input type="checkbox"/> School governor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent / Guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> Local resident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the Parent Teacher Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Local business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Local sports group |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Local community group |

Other (please specify): _____

At which school? _____

What is your postcode? _____

Your views will help us decide if this proposal goes ahead. You can tell us your views by returning this completed form to:

- Your school office
- Emailing schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk
- Accessing our online survey: <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/gt-massingham>

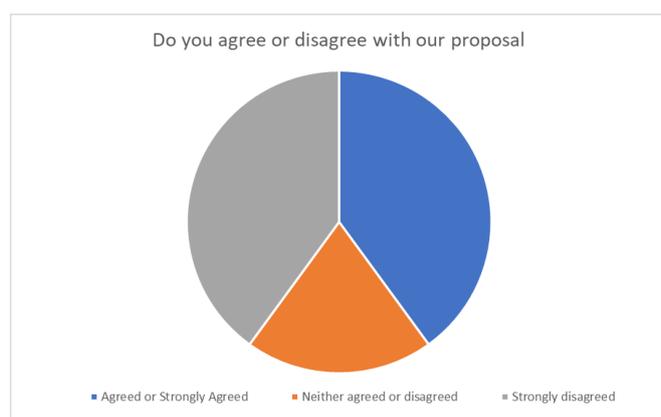
This consultation ends on 20th October 2023

Appendix B

Analysis of Consultation Responses

There were 5 responses to the consultation.

- 2 people Strongly agreed or agreed (%)
- 1 person neither agreed or disagreed
- 2 people strongly disagreed (%) with the proposal.



Who Responded

- 2 Parents
- 1 Local Business
- 3 Local Residents

*Please note, some people may have ticked more than one box i.e. member of staff and governor.

There were several comments or suggestions made on the proposal, including;

- As a parent at Great Massingham I would like to ensure the school maintains numbers to remain open for our current children and future children in the village and wider area. The loss of a primary school to a thriving village is a huge blow.
- There are currently dwindling numbers of children throughout Norfolk due to the impact of house prices, holiday homes and elderly generations moving into the area. This has had a massive impact on the younger generation staying in the area to set up family and therefore feeding the school with new blood so to speak. By moving the catchment area it allows one school at least to stay open and keep numbers up in classes.
- What other choice do we have to agree/disagree the catchment covers more of the area? That choice has already been made.
- I disagree because the closure of Weasenhams School is wrong on so many levels. I have written to various people regarding this matter and hope that common sense will prevail and there will be no need to include Weasenhams in the catchment area for Massingham school.
- This seems like nothing more than a money saving exercise which is what happens when schools are effectively privatised when they are part of academy chains. Research shows children learn better in smaller class sizes. The school was recently awarded money for building work. Is this money to be swallowed up by the academy chain. Expecting young children to travel to and from school on a bus.

Consultation Event

A consultation event was held on 21 September 2023 at Great Massingham Primary School.. Three people attended, along with the Headteacher, Vice Chair of Governors, Diocese Director of Education, Admissions Manager NCC and School Organisation Manager NCC. The key issues raised included;

- Finance implications of pupils moving into the school
- Pre-school offer in the area
- Impact of Weasenham closing including parental preference for local schools, loss of pre-school, distance to Brisley and transport offer and what happens to Weasenham school building if it closes.

Other comments or suggestions to help with this decision and in planning for the future provision of the children:-

- I would be concerned that an increase in numbers leaves the facilities and the space available within the Great Massingham under further pressure. There is already a concern regarding the older children having to eat in their classrooms, and for the staff to spend a lot of their day having to move and allocate space to the needs of lunch/PE/class etc. will Massingham gain funds to improve and maintain their stretched facilities and employ enough staff to cover a larger intake.
- More help with Buying or Renting homes in the area for parents who have grown up in the area or Norfolk even as a whole and help keep the children in the community.
- The provision for rural communities gets less and less. Our children are forgotten about. There isn't enough provision for young children as it is and you just keep taking things away. The reason why the intake at schools like Weasenham is so small is because people take provisions for young children away, which in turn prevents people moving into the area and promotes people moving out of the area. We moved into this area as we wanted our young daughter to attend a small local village school and preschool. You've now taken that away from her and us and you should not hold that decision in your hands. Make the catchment for Weasenham bigger. It doesn't cover enough. The wrong people are put in charge of making these outrageous decisions. No one comes around to rural communities, so do you really know the decision you're making is the right one? You are preventing our children from receiving the education they deserve. You closing this school could and will be detrimental to some children's education. Such a move for some children will be catastrophic. Our daughter has no chance of getting a preschool placement due to you also closing the preschool, we had her due to start in the January of next year. Preschools in the local area are few and far between. The ones which are left are now well over subscribed and we have no chance of getting our daughter in to a preschool in January and potentially not at all. Not everyone can afford private nursery fees. State funded is expensive enough. Therefore, you are stopping her from having access to social interaction and an early years education and we condemn you for taking that away from her and us.
- If you are looking at the future of the children, you will have no doubts in your minds that retaining the village school at Weasenham will be the best option. The impact this closure will have on the two villages is going to be massive, as there is now no active Church, no pub, no shop and, without a school, or any childcare facilities, there will be nothing to encourage young families to move into the area. It will become a retirement village.
- Keep the school open. With how areas are having huge building work it is only a matter of time before there is new housing built which could see families move in.