

## **REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOR PERMISSION TO PUBLISH A PUBLIC NOTICE FOR A CHANGE TO THE ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS IN NORTH YARMOUTH:**

- **To close Alderman Swindell Primary School on 31 August 2018**
- **To change the age range of North Denes Primary School from 4 – 11 to 2 -11 (PAN : 60) from 1 September 2018**

### **ANAYLSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

#### **Background:**

Norfolk County Council undertook a consultation between 12 June and 21 July 2017 on a proposal that all primary school children in the North Yarmouth area, go to one primary school, on the North Denes Primary School site. This would be achieved by building a new larger school building which will accommodate all the children and which could be expanded further. There would be provision for pre-school children on this site.

If this proceeds, the change would be made from 1 September 2018.

#### **Purpose of report:**

This report is in four parts:

Part 1: the consultation process

Part 2: analysis of consultation responses

Part 3: project costs

Part 4: recommendation and next steps

#### **PART 1: The consultation process:**

Over 3200 consultation documents were distributed in accordance with the Department for Education guidance on statutory school organisation changes. Consultees included pupils; parents and carers; staff; other schools in the local area; the local MP; the local District and County Councillors; Diocesan Bodies and early years providers. All households in the immediate neighbourhood area of Alderman Swindell Primary School and North Denes Primary Schools received directly a copy of the full consultation document. The document was also available as a shortened leaflet in English, Portuguese, Lithuanian and Russian. The full distribution list is provided in Table 1 below. The consultation document explained the proposal and provided a range of means to respond. These included; post boxes in the two schools; freepost reply; online questionnaire/survey; or by email to [schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk)

The consultation document was also made available on the County Council's website at <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/north-yarmouth/>

Four stakeholder meetings were agreed between the Headteachers and the County Council prior to the start of the consultation and were held as follows:

20 June from 5 – 6pm at North Denes Primary School – 25 people attended

22 June from 2 - 3pm at Alderman Swindell Primary School – 75 people attended

27 June from 2.30 – 3.30pm at North Denes Primary School – 25 people attended

29 June from 5 – 6pm at Alderman Swindell Primary School – 60 people attended

Table 1: Consultation distribution list

Organisation	No. of copies
Alderman Swindell Primary School – staff and governors	70
North Denes Primary School – staff and governors	70
Pupils, parents/carers and local residents/organisations - all addresses in the area served by the two schools (includes parents/carers living out of area)	3000
Staff Professional Associations	9
Diocesan Boards of Education/Roman Catholic Diocese	3
County Councillors in the locality	4
Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Chief Executive	1
Great Yarmouth Borough Councillors	8
Brandon Lewis MP	1
Early Years Providers (11 x 2)	22
Local Schools – Primary, Secondary, Special, Independent (32 x 2)	64
Northgate Hospital, Silverwood Child and Family Centre	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3253</b>

The consultation period ran from Monday 12 June to Friday 21 July 2017. During that period a report was made to the Children’s Services Committee (Item 8: School Organisation: 26 June 2017\*) to inform the Executive Director of Children’s Services of Members views, when making his decision on the next steps.

**\*Extract from the minutes of Children’s Services Committee 26 June 2017:**

‘The Committee noted the extant consultation in the northern part of Great Yarmouth. With the current arrangements, substantial investment would be needed at both Alderman Swindell Primary School and North Denes Primary School to effect the accommodation improvements for a full primary phase school. If all children were on one site, the investment could be in significantly better facilities for the whole area.

If a decision was made to close Alderman Swindell School, the property would be considered for future educational use by Children’s Services Department. There was a strong case to use the school for children with special or additional learning needs.

**The Committee RESOLVED to:**

- Note the Council’s powers in respect of school organisation,
- Note the three extant consultation exercises and offer the comments above on the current consultation exercise for north Yarmouth to inform the Director’s decision on whether to proceed to Statutory Notice after the end of the consultation period’.

**Under Item 5 - Public Questions for Children’s Services Committee 26th June 2017,** the Committee received the following question from Alison Hopley – Headteacher Alderman Swindell Primary School and Nursery (Reference agenda Item 8 – School Organisation)

‘Please could you define how the word reorganise is being used in the Executive summary, page 85, bullet point one. This has huge future employment implications for all Alderman Swindell staff. Does it mean to merge and thus create a new school out of an Requires Improvement School and a Coasting School, where staff from both schools would have fair access to all posts both teaching and non-teaching or does it mean extension of North

Denes, where current North Denes staff retain their jobs and surplus capacity is ring-fenced for Alderman Swindell Staff?’

**Reply by the Chairman:** The Local Authority is in an informal process of consultation with a wide range of stake holders to move children onto a single site. There is as yet no specific ‘Proposal’ that would offer clarification on staffing.

On 24 July 2017, Members of the County Council were met by a group of 25 or so peaceful demonstrators, including pupils from Alderman Swindell Primary School.

Alderman Swindell Primary School held its own meeting on 12 July, for parents and members of the community who were unable to attend any of the dates/times previously agreed with the schools. We asked the Chair of Governors to ensure that any views given at the event were fed back to us via [schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk) by the closing date, so that we could ensure they are included with all other responses from the consultation process.

## **PART 2: analysis of consultation responses:**

Question 1 on the response form asked people to indicate whether they agreed with the proposal that all primary school children in the North Yarmouth area, go to one primary school, on the North Denes Primary School site. 860 people responded to this question:

363 (42.21%) support the proposal

493 (57.33%) do not support the proposal

4 (0.47%) gave no answer

Question 2 asked people for their comments or suggestions to help us with the decision.

### **Those who support the proposal made the following observations/assertions:**

- The DfE preferred model based on research is that 2FE schools are more financially viable and able to offer better teaching and learning opportunities.
- Both of the current schools are too small to cope with the change to primary phase and should be replaced by one new large school on the North Denes (ND) site. Don't waste money patching up two old buildings.
- The roads around Alderman Swindell (AS) site are too busy and many drive their children to this site instead of walking, ND site is much safer for traffic.
- ND is a prime site with its large field and open spaces for science and sport.
- A new building will enhance and inspire the children's educational experience, for too long there has been a lack of investment in Gt Yarmouth – second rate education in second rate school buildings. Will attract good staff and demonstrate NCC is concerned about education in this area.
- Learning could be developed further as a bigger school is able to resource the curriculum more effectively, more opportunity for outside learning with a larger staff team; teachers can plan by year group and share strengths and experience.
- Cost effectiveness: reduce running costs - a new school would require less maintenance and improvement; some staff savings – more money for the children's education. Larger schools are more financially viable. Economies of scale, bulk purchase etc.
- A great opportunity for the future generation. Give our children of the future hope in such a deprived area.
- Will improve the sense of belonging and allow community space for parents, pupils and staff.

- The new school would be able to expand on support levels; e.g. links to CAMHS mental health worker would be available to a wider range of families and pupils who require this support.
- School performance: together the schools may be able to achieve outstanding school status to benefit the area. Better and increased opportunities, better resources.
- Acquisition of the derelict Iron Duke site would facilitate better access to the new school. There must be better drop-off and pick-up arrangements – the bridge is dangerous and cannot cope with more cars.
- Understand and respect people's nostalgia but do not allow it to stand in the way of progress.
- Safeguarding: one school, one policy, one high standard. Wellbeing team will be able to offer high level support to more families through the Family Hub.
- Consistency of provision from nursery age throughout the primary phase. Also with interventions, catch up, family support.
- A new building would create a better working/learning environment (reference class size, seasonal temperature fluctuation, facilities e.g. ICT, sports hall and library, and safety features e.g. access to external fire doors)
- Trying to adapt the two existing school buildings would cause massive disruption (and stress) to children and staff. A new build is economically viable with least impact on the children.
- Sports facilities to be used by the community, desperately needed.
- Staff currently working at AS should be moved to the ND site.
- Change can be a very good thing.
- One school with a full understanding of the whole family – no breakdown in communication. Consistency, economies of scale, better outcomes for children.
- A logical solution with two other primary schools only 10 minutes' walk away (Northgate and St Nicholas Priory)
- Will allow pupils to be separated from those with whom they have friendship issues – re-mix classes so that pupils work with different children. Better preparation for high school and supports learning.
- Agree but concerned about large class sizes and potential re-use of AS site for housing.
- A new building would be more efficient for pupils with physical disabilities – allowing wider corridors and larger classrooms for easier access for wheelchairs etc.
- Ends competition and disagreement between the two schools who should be working as partners. Equality of provision.
- A better place to learn and we will make new friends. More after school clubs.
- AS is not equipped to accommodate older children. An outdated facility with mobile classrooms.
- Much misleading negative information has been published through campaigns which is unprofessional and a shame. The children are the priority here and every teacher should promote the best for the children's education.
- This is an opportunity to bring the best from both schools together and revolutionise the educational experience of our local children.

**Those that did not support the proposal made the following observations/assertions:**

- Alderman Swindell (AS) is important to the community and should continue to provide choice for parents in the area. Parents like to have the option of a 1FE

school. Secondary school choice has been reduced to nothing and this will further destroy future options at primary level.

- Will the proposal provide sufficient school places and provision for 2 – 4 year olds, and the 30 hour entitlement?
- Children perform better in small schools, they have a sense of belonging in a small community. AS is popular and well performing. All the children are known to the staff. Results are better than at ND.
- Attendance and behaviour are better at AS and no pupils have been excluded.
- Invest and make the improvements to both schools. Two schools better serve the diverse needs of the area, with different ethos, different strengths and different approach to the curriculum.
- ND doesn't have the capacity, no matter how much it is extended, to take in the growing number of young children within the area.
- Children with SEN make good progress at AS and are supported well.
- Will increase class sizes - 60 pupils per year group is outrageous and will lead to overcrowding, leading to lower standards. Classes will be too large, teachers looking after so many will not have sufficient time for each child.
- A large school would be overwhelming and damage learning and emotional well-being. Children get 'lost' in large schools.
- AS is highly undervalued and deserves better respect, should be celebrated and praised for the work they do.
- It would remove personal contact between head and individual pupils and there would be more bullying.
- ND does not effectively deal with bullying/safeguarding.
- The upheaval would be distressing and a distraction to children's learning.
- The school (AS) is easy to get to and well run. We would no longer be able to walk to school and parking would be difficult. How will the extra traffic be accommodated on ND bridge? Concern about increasing pollution/environmental impact assessment needed. Concerns for safety of children at ND entrance (ref increased traffic).
- Concern there are already too many children on the ND site.
- My children thrive at AS but I believe ND struggles already with organisation (events etc).
- Please consider the job losses to extremely hard working dedicated staff who have made their careers by serving this area. Jobs should be allocated by skills audit.
- Close links with the community would be lost. AS is a community hub.
- My children are settled at AS and I won't send them to ND – will opt to home educate.
- Ofsted – with an agenda to close AS – does not believe AS is a failing school but believes ND has some way to go to become good.
- Bigger is not always better and new buildings do not always improve a school.
- Larger schools are less personal and tend to have higher exclusion rates.
- Great amounts of outdoor space (at ND) will be lost.
- Closing AS would be a great loss to North Yarmouth. It has served generations of families in this community and is part of Yarmouth's heritage. Both are schools with history and important to the community. This doesn't need to happen and is not wanted by the local community.
- Both schools should be retained – build upwards at AS and find an alternative site for the alternative provision school.

- Does not want children taught on a building site. The building work at ND would be disruptive, renovation would be more appropriate.
- Is financially driven with no thought about the children.
- Ludicrous to close a successful and oversubscribed school in favour of another.
- The location (ND) is further out of town and less preferred by parents.
- Invest in both schools and fund them to provide alternative provision for SEN and behaviour units.
- ND coasting status and expectation that it will become an academy.
- The caring and supportive environment of AS will be lost in a larger school.
- Both schools are excellent and neither should close.
- Ofsted advice and research (Manchester) suggests that smaller schools (medium size) offer a more consistent and effective educational experience for students.
- The consultation seems rushed and is not clear. Decision already made. Biased approach to ND. Takeover not merger.
- ND has relied heavily on supply teachers given a high turnover in teaching staff, AS has a permanent staff and good links with parents.
- Will the new uniform be provided - if not the division between the 2 schools will be clearly visible.
- Build a new school on Bernard Bridge site and keep the 2 schools open until all building work is complete.
- I feel safe in school (AS).
- Negative impact on the community and local business.
- Inspect (Ofsted) both schools before hasty decisions are made.
- Adding an already full school (AS) to the ND site is not a good idea.
- Recent investment at AS will be wasted if the school closes (replacement boiler, doors, windows etc).
- Establish a new all-through Free School on the ND site.

**Those that neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal made the following observations/assertions:**

- Understand the need for cost effectiveness, but when you enlarge schools they lose intimacy which is a real shame for the pupils.
- A larger staff team means a greater pool of expertise to draw from - allows high quality input in staff meetings and further CPD to develop subject expertise.
- Better opportunities for non-class based teachers to deliver high quality interventions and support learning in the classroom. In a smaller school, this is not affordable.
- A bigger school is able to resource the curriculum more effectively, through having a larger budget.
- Opportunities to learn outside of the classroom (or within the community) are more viable in a larger school – this helps to develop the children’s understanding of the world and to participate in activities that they wouldn’t usually experience.
- Consistency in assessment: on-entry data (when we receive children in Y3) doesn't always match with children's KS1 results. We would be able to follow progression through the school from Reception.
- Consistency in provision – interventions, catch-up (where needed), family support, mental health support can continue without being impacted by a change of school.

**We asked for views on the possible re-use of the buildings currently occupied by Alderman Swindell Primary school, to meet the needs of children and young people who cannot be educated in a mainstream school. Observations/assertions included:**

- No objection if the building is used to accommodate physically or mentally handicapped children, but doubt the community would take too kindly to seeing it being used for the education of youngsters out of control and out of school hours, likely to cause havoc in the neighbourhood. The area has a large number of elderly and sick people, some who live in close proximity to AS.
- There is a much needed provision in the area for children with learning difficulties or behaviour problems.
- The AS site lends itself for adaptation to a complex needs school to meet the needs of local youngsters who often have to travel long distances to access appropriate education.
- Create more places locally and reduce transport costs and travelling time for children.
- Disruptive pupils should not be taught at a site in the centre of a residential area and close to a children's play park.
- Would provide a better education for mainstream children who would otherwise have a disruptive child in their class.
- Use for Asperger syndrome for children up to 18 years, and other sensitive children who get lost in mainstream education.
- The Town is in desperate need of a behaviour SRB/ / referral unit for KS2.
- A youth club for 5 – 12 and 12 – 16 year olds.
- Early year's hub for local community or adult learning space.
- Short stay school provision for KS1 and 2.
- A little hospital, home care, elder support. A library. Care home, ChildLine service, hospital for children. Sports centre, restaurant or café, pharmacy, shopping centre, military school, dentist. A place for homeless people to go.
- It should not be left empty which would lead to crime, or be demolished.
- A school for children going through speech therapy.
- Special school for autistic children.
- We don't need two primary schools when we could have one primary and one special school.
- The CASSTLE can be a school for children with special needs.
- The AS school is not a suitable location for children with behavioural problems. The school is situated in a quiet residential areas, mainly populated by middle aged and retired people. The school building would be better deployed by being converted into retirement homes.
- The AS site should be retained for some kind of educational provision, whether that is an SRB, early years of a PRU.
- Develop ND site for the special school.
- It will have a negative impact on house prices - AS is one of the reasons why house prices have remained strong in this area.
- A purpose built site for SEN would be a better alternative.
- An exclusion schools needs to be on the outskirts and not in the heart of the community. For example: Beacon Park (Gorleston) is a better area for SEN children; The old Adult Training Centre on Suffolk Road or the vacated M & S building in Town would be more appropriate for these children.

Question 3 asked respondents to classify themselves (approximately 100 have recorded joint roles e.g. parent and local resident);

174 (20.23%) were pupils\*

296 (34.42%) were parents/carers of children at the 2 schools \*

5 (0.58%) were members of PTA at the 2 schools\*

89 (10.35%) were members of staff\*

15 (1.74%) were school governors\*

285 (33.14%) were local residents

18 (2.09%) were local businesses

28 (3.26%) belonged to a local sports group

15 (1.74%) were local community groups

37 (4.30%) chose not to answer

\*An analysis of the responses from key stakeholders (579 respondents) is given below.

	Alderman Swindell			North Denes			Not identified or other school			Both AS and ND (parents only)		Total responses
	Agree	Disagree	No answer	Agree	Disagree	No answer	Agree	Disagree	No answer	Agree	Disagree	
Pupil		7		146	13			8				174
Staff	2	21		61			3	1	1			89
Parent	4	163		64	21		3	24		5	12	296
Governor		6		6			1	2				15
PTA member		4		1								5
Total	6	201		278	34	0	7	35	1	5	12	579

285 local residents replied to the consultation. 71 support the proposal while 213 do not and 1 did not answer.

Other documents received:

- Letters were received from the following key stakeholders and are attached at Appendix A:
  - The Chair of Governors, Alderman Swindell Primary School
  - The Joint Division Secretary, Norfolk Association of the National Union of Teachers
- A petition to 'Save our School Alderman Swindell' contained 65 signatures.
- 25 leaflets were received on which people were asked to tell of their experiences of Alderman Swindell School.
- A Change.org petition invited people sign to '*Save Alderman Swindell Primary School. I urge you to support this school and the local community, pupils, parents and staff who stand united to protect their local school*'. The petition had 1323 signatures. Recipients of the petition were the Chair and Vice-Chair of the CS Committee, the Chair of Norfolk County Council and the Executive Director of Children's Services.

A copy of the consultation document is provided at Appendix B.



### **PART 3: PROJECT COSTS**

The current estimated cost of the new school building on the North Denes site is £7.25m. This is available in the approved CS schools capital budget.

### **PART 4: RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS**

Taking into account that all statutory requirements in relation to the initial consultation were complied with, and the views of those who have expressed an interest in this proposal have been taken fully into account, it is recommended that it proceeds to the next stage of formal Public Notice.

In pursuant of the delegated powers granted to me by the Children's Services Committee (10<sup>th</sup> July 2014) and in accordance within the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, I hereby give permission for a public notice to be issued on the proposal to provide a single primary school on the North Denes site. We will do this by:

- Closing Alderman Swindell Primary School on 31 August 2018.
- To change the age range of North Denes Primary School from 4 – 11 to 2 -11 (PAN : 60) from 1 September 2018

The explanatory note will state that all pupils attending Alderman Swindell Primary School at the time of closure will be offered a place at the primary school on the North Denes site.

The Public Notice appear in the Yarmouth Mercury at the start of the autumn term, on Friday 8 September 2017.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Executive Director of Children's Services)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

14/8/17.