

The Case for Maintaining the Status Quo in North Yarmouth

Norfolk County Council is consulting on the closure of Alderman Swindell Primary School and the rebuilding of North Denes.

Parental choice

It is abundantly clear that in the case of Alderman Swindell there is a definitive preference by parents in the catchment area to send their children to the school; this year's intake is oversubscribed while North Denes is failing to attract pupil numbers.

Two single-form entry schools is another option not considered, with the North Denes site previously home to an SRB for SEN provision, the renewal of this option would greatly benefit the local community and follow best practice in SEN provision.

Local Community

Schools are the heart of their communities, the outpouring of support for the school is testimony of the important role the school plays in the local community. As a hub within the local area Alderman Swindell attracts footfall that supports local businesses, the geographic isolation of the North Denes site from the local community and the poor access to the site would be detrimental to the local community should Alderman Swindell be closed.

What are the effects of school closure?

- Negative effects on community cohesion
- Reduction in economic vitality

A lot of community activities occur at school, from family-centred activity to wider community and health and wellbeing activities. Alderman Swindell has a purpose built community hub that functions in school hours as additional teaching space and outside along with the school hall as a venue for numerous community beneficial activities.

Schools are very often responsible for creating a sense of "community and collective identity" the fact that generations of children have attended Alderman Swindell foster a shared experience and bond between generations of local residents.

There is an economic consideration to the local community, school closures are known to contribute to the economic downturn, especially where centrally located facilities are consolidated to site on the edge of towns, isolated from the community and local shops. We must also consider the impact of the closure in terms of contributing to the change in make-up of the community, good schools attract young families, the lack of such schools could be the catalyst for a shift in the demographic that affects overall pupil numbers within the North Yarmouth area.

Employment

Alderman Swindell is a leading employer in an area of high deprivation, the loss of skilled and non-skilled jobs within the local community will only contribute to an environment of high unemployment and lack of opportunity that pervades the urban areas of Great Yarmouth.

Educational Diversity

Alderman Swindell is consistently praised by inspectors, councillors and local community members for the behaviour of its pupils, small schools (of less than 300 pupils) have been shown in academic studies to perform better in areas of deprivation and foster an environment where pupils behave better. Small schools are safer, more flexible and responsive to the needs of their communities.

This year's academic results for Alderman Swindell are amongst the best in the GY7 cluster. 75.9% of our EYFS pupils met the Good Level of Development compared with the National Average of 70.6%. In Key Stage 1 88.7% met the expected standard in reading, 83% in writing and 84.9% in mathematics compared to the National Averages of 75.8%, 68.4% and 75.3% respectively. Y1 Phonics achieved 90% compared with 81% nationally.

What are the other options?

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo

It is clear that this is what the community wishes, the attendance at consultation meetings and other public meetings as well as the community campaign against the closure show a high level of support for the school.

Option 2: Establish a New 'All-through' Free School at North Denes

Education in Norfolk could benefit from some radical thinking, the North Denes site is sufficiently large enough to accommodate an all-through school to provide education from 2 years to 16 or 19 years, providing the community with increased secondary school capacity that is local to Yarmouth town and continuity of education to the pupils. SEN provision could then be supplemented through an SRB located alongside Alderman Swindell Primary to create an SEN centre of excellence alongside a mainstream school.

Option 3: Two small schools with specialist provision

Rebuilding North Denes as a single-form entry primary with attached SEN provision and establishment of an Early Years Centre at Alderman Swindell would be a viable option to extend specialist educational provision within the Yarmouth area, creating two centres of excellence in the local community.

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