

**COUNCIL
21 JANUARY 2004**

**REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN SOUTH BRACKNELL
(Director of Education)**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The consultation on the options to remove surplus places is now complete and this report informs the Council of the outcome of that consultation and asks that the proposed recommendations for change to the pattern of school organisation in Bracknell Forest be considered by the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the results of the consultation on the review of primary school places in South Bracknell be noted; and**
- 2.2 **That the recommended changes to the organisation of schools in South Bracknell, detailed in the attached Report to the Executive on 20 January 2004, be considered by the Council.**

3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 In addition to those made in the report to the Executive on 20 January 2004 the Borough Solicitor has the following comments. Those Members who are serve on a governing body of primary schools within the South Bracknell area have both a personal and prejudicial Interest in the review. Accordingly, such Members should declare that they have a personal interest, the nature of their interest (i.e. that they serve on the governing body of a school within the review area) and withdraw from the Council Chamber during consideration of this item.
- 3.2 Those Members who serve on the School Organisation Committee (SOC) should bear in mind that they should not pre-determine their view on matters which are to go before the SOC if they wish to participate at the SOC meeting. Accordingly, any views expressed by such Members on this item (and the way in which they vote) should be made on the footing that they may arrive at a different conclusion when the matter comes before the SOC.

Borough Finance Officer

- 3.3 Included in the Report to the Executive on 20 January 2004.

Access Implications

- 3.4 Included in the Report to the Executive on 20 January 2004.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The attached report to the Executive on 20 January 2004 details the results of the consultation concerning the Review of surplus places in south Bracknell Primary schools and proposes a change in the pattern of school organisation in the area.
- 4.2 The Council is asked to consider the proposed changes and comment on these. After that, a decision will be taken by the Executive Member for Education on 3 February, following his consideration of the comments of the Council.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest School Organisation Plan 2003 - 2008
Consultation leaflet and technical background document
Notes of public meetings

November 2003
November 2003

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**TO: THE EXECUTIVE
20 JANUARY 2004**

**REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN SOUTH BRACKNELL
(Director of Education)**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The consultation on the options to remove surplus places is now complete and this report informs the Executive of the outcome of that consultation and recommends a change to the pattern of school organisation in Bracknell Forest to reduce the number of surplus places.
- 1.2 The School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, sets out arrangements for decisions on school organisation to be taken at a local level. Bracknell Forest as a Local Education Authority (LEA) has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places in its local area. Local Education Authorities have to make sure that schools in their area are sufficient in number, character and resources to provide education suitable for the different ages, abilities, aptitudes and special educational needs of pupils.
- 1.3 In South Bracknell, despite proposed significant housing development on the Staff College site, the number of surplus places is increasing and a Review was necessary to ensure that the viability of schools in the area is maintained in the longer term.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the results of the consultation on the review of primary school places in South Bracknell be noted;**
- 2.2 **That the following recommended changes to the organisation of schools in South Bracknell be proposed for consideration by the Full Council at its meeting on 21 January 2004 and subsequent decision by the Executive Member for Education on 3 February, following his consideration of the comments of the Full Council:**
- (a) **The Staff College Site be solely within the designated area of Harmans Water Primary school and not part of the designated areas of Fox Hill and Wildridings Primary schools, as shown in Annex F;**
 - (b) **The Pines Infant and The Pines Junior Schools be amalgamated to create a 210 place primary school on the Junior School site with effect from 1 September 2005, with a planned admission number of 30 with effect from 1 January 2006. The designated area of the new school be the same as that of the two existing schools;**
 - (c) **Arrangements for changes in the accommodation at The Pines be the subject of a further report for consultation with the governing bodies and the Church at the Pines;**
 - (d) **Fox Hill Primary School be reduced to a 210 place primary school with a planned admission number of 30 with effect from 1 January 2006. The**

school be based in the Key Stage 2 building with effect from 1 September 2005. The designated area of the school be reduced:

- i) so as not to include the Staff College site;
 - ii) in the north to enable the boundary to run down the middle of the whole of the Bagshot Road (as per Annex F);
- (e) Arrangements for changes to the accommodation at Fox Hill Primary School be the subject of a further report for consultation with the governing body;
- (f) Wildridings Primary School be reduced to a 315 place primary school with a planned admission number of 45 with effect from 1 January 2006. The designated area be reduced so as not to include the Staff College site;
- (g) Arrangements as to how the 90 places can be removed from Wildridings Primary School be the subject of further consultation with the governing body;
- (h) The accommodation at Birch Hill Primary school be reduced to 449 places, as soon as circumstances allow, with a planned admission number of 60 being published for the school with effect from 1 January 2006.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The continued decline in primary aged pupil numbers in South Bracknell does not sustain the current pattern of school organisation. Changes to the current pattern of organisation are therefore required to ensure the viability of all schools in the area.
- 3.2 The recommendations address the required target number of place reductions for the area and also take into account many of the concerns raised during the consultation.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Alternative options for change have been considered through the consultation process. In addition, through the process, consultees have also suggested alternative patterns of organisation. These have been considered thoroughly and are referred to in the analysis of responses.
- 4.2 Should the Executive choose to take no action at all, the consequences would be:
- Increasing surplus accommodation at all schools, which would require maintenance, heating and lighting as it is very difficult to mothball individual classrooms;
 - More widespread and less well planned reductions in staffing as pupil numbers decline;
 - Fixed costs becoming a higher proportion of each school's budget, with less flexibility at the margins;
 - Insufficient resources to maintain year group teaching in most schools;
 - Greater risk of budget deficits in schools;

- Greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly new headteachers, as schools decline in size.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 This paper asks the Executive to note the results of the consultation process on the review of primary school places in South Bracknell and seeks agreement to refer proposed changes to the current pattern of school organisation to the Full Council for discussion on 21 January. After that, a decision will be taken by the Executive Member for Education on 3 February, following his consideration of the comments of the Full Council.

Background

- 5.2 Falling numbers on roll can cause particular difficulties for schools trying to maintain a stable educational environment. School budgets are particularly sensitive to changing numbers of pupils. In order to manage within budget, schools in these circumstances may have to change staffing arrangements year on year and manage the fall in staff morale generated by redundancies. Schools falling below one form of entry (30 pupils a year) will begin to face financial difficulties in terms of revenue funding and maintaining school organisation and will also have responsibilities to heat and maintain classrooms that are no longer needed.

- 5.3 The following table summarises the pupil number situation in the South Bracknell area:

	Places	Pupils	Surplus	% surplus
April 2003	4159	3557	602	14.5%
April 2008	4159	3276	883	21.2%

Places - excludes Peacock Farm Primary and includes Voluntary Aided primaries.

Pupils - includes Pupils from Staff College site and Voluntary Aided primaries and excludes pupils from Peacock Farm site.

- 5.4 The objective of the Review is to remove at least 420 places (equivalent to 2 forms of entry) and, if possible, 500 places from South Bracknell to allow approximately 10% (415) or fewer surplus places to remain. This would ensure scope for an appropriate degree of parental preference to continue.

The Proposals

- 5.5 On 21 October the Executive agreed to consult the community in South Bracknell on the following proposals.
- 5.6 Underpinning them is a proposal to change the school designated area boundaries in relation to the Staff College site. At present the pupils from the development would be shared between three schools: Harmans Water Primary School, Fox Hill Primary School and Wildridings Primary School. The proposal is to allocate the site to the designated area of Harmans Water Primary School only.
- 5.7 This has not been an issue in the past as the number of pupils living on this site has been very low and the Ministry of Defence arranged transport for many of them to attend Wildridings Primary School. However, the Bagshot Road forms a physical

barrier between the Staff College site and Fox Hill Primary and Wildridings Primary (although there are underpasses allowing safe crossing of this road). Pupils from the furthest edge of the Staff College site will have 1.08 miles to walk through the open space on the site to Harmans Water Primary.

- 5.8 Therefore, the underpinning assumption of the options proposed for consultation was that Harmans Water Primary School will become the **only** designated area school for the Staff College site. The pupils will not be in the designated area for Fox Hill Primary or Wildridings Primary schools. Harmans Water Primary School has 192 pupils on its roll who live in other schools' designated areas. This, combined with general falling numbers on roll, means that Harmans Water Primary should be able to accommodate all pupils from the Staff College site as it develops over the next 5-6 years.
- 5.9 The development of the Staff College site means that any change at Crown Wood Primary School has to be viewed in the longer term as there could be significant numbers of pupils from the Crown Wood area not able in future to gain a place at Harmans Water Primary or Birch Hill Primary schools owing to increasing numbers on roll and reductions in accommodation at these schools.
- 5.10 The preferred option in the consultation was **Option 1**. In total this would remove 503 places and reduce the overall surplus to 12.6% by 2008. This option comprises a number of measures. It would:
- a) Amalgamate Fox Hill Primary and Wildridings Primary on the Wildridings site
 - b) Amalgamate The Pines Infant and Juniors to a 210 place school
 - c) Reduce Birch Hill to a 449 place school
- 5.11 The other options in the consultation were **Option 2**, which would remove 480 places and reduce the overall surplus to 13.2% by 2008. It would:
- a) Amalgamate Fox Hill Primary and Wildridings Primary on the Wildridings site
 - b) Reduce Birch Hill to a 449 place school
 - c) Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school
- 5.12 **Option 3** would remove 527 places and reduce the overall surplus to 14.1 % by 2008. It would:
- a) Close Wooden Hill
 - b) Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school
- 5.13 The reason why the removal of places at different schools leaves different percentages of surplus places under each option is to do with the redistribution effect of limiting the school's intake, which distributes different numbers of pupils to schools outside South Bracknell in the different options. It is also influenced by the temporary accommodation that is needed under each option in order to secure the longer term reduction.
- 5.14 The principles underlying all the options were to:
- ensure that all pupils live close to their designated area school.
 - remove surplus places that do not leave schools with a continued maintenance problem i.e. to remove modular buildings where feasible, rather than mothball classrooms in a permanent building;

- ensure schools are maintained at a viable size, above one form of entry where possible;
 - try to ensure schools have the correct level of accommodation and admission to facilitate year group teaching where possible; and
 - release whole school sites, if possible, to improve the viability of the remaining schools by distributing pupils amongst fewer school establishments.
- 5.15 The number of pupils a school can admit in each year is related to the accommodation it has. This number can only be increased or decreased legally by changing the level of accommodation or arguing that it is necessary to maintain infant class sizes at a maximum of 30.

Consultation outcomes

- 5.16 The consultation process extended to a wide audience:
- parents of children at the schools
 - governing bodies
 - employees
 - teacher associations and other unions
 - early years settings
 - the community in which the schools are located
 - the diocesan authorities
 - The School Organisation Committee
 - Bracknell and Wokingham College
 - The LSC
 - Neighbouring LEAs.
- 5.17 A consultation document was sent to all consultees and this was followed by a technical background document (for the education community and others on request) to reflect the options agreed by the Executive and explain the issues to the wider audience. All documents were available on the Borough Council Website.
- 5.18 The consultation was carried out over six weeks from the beginning of November through the written consultation documents and a range of meetings, giving people the opportunity to question Education staff on the range of options, or to write in to support or state their objections to them.
- 5.19 Meetings were held with:
- Head teachers and chairmen of governors of all the schools covered by the review;
 - Teacher Associations and trade unions
 - Diocesan authorities
 - Members of staff and governors of those schools included in the options, including trade union representatives;
 - Parents and members of the local community at three public meetings;
 - Parents at one Parents' Annual General Meeting at the request of Wildridings Governing Body;
 - The Lifelong Learning Select Committee, which also visited all schools included in the options;
 - Members of the Governing Body of Fox Hill Primary School, at their request;
 - The Chairman of Wildridings Primary School at her request;

- Headteachers of all Bracknell Forest primary schools
- 5.20 The public meetings were all taped and the notes of each public meeting were published on the Borough Council website. Each meeting lasted approximately 4 hours and each was attended by between 130 and 200 people.
- 5.21 A petition from the Fox Hill Action Group was received by the Director of Education in person. A petition from Wooden Hill Action group was also received.
- 5.22 A protest was staged in Bracknell Town Centre involving parents from The Pines, Wooden Hill and Fox Hill primary schools.
- 5.23 The Review received considerable media interest and was reported in the local press as well as on the regional TV and radio stations.
- 5.24 The consultation period ended on 19 December, after which all the written responses and letters were collated and analysed. The full report of the results of the consultation is attached at Annex A.
- 5.25 Of the 4,800 consultation leaflets that were distributed, 343 standard response forms were returned, representing a response rate of 7%. This may be partly because consultees used other means such as stylised letters or petitions to register their views.
- 5.26 Responses to the consultation were received in a number of different formats (letter email and response form) and through a variety of channels. There was a degree of duplication as some consultees use more than one format and also as some people classified themselves as both a parent and a member of the community. This has led to the number of responses being counted as 409 although only 343 forms were actually submitted.
- 5.27 Of the standard response forms:
- 124 (36%) selected Option 1
 - 18 (5%) selected Option 2
 - 41 (12 %) selected option 3
 - 150 (44%) did not select an option
 - 10 (3%) voted for more than one option
- 5.28 63% of the responses were from parents (mostly of Wooden Hill and Fox Hill schools) with 10% from school staff, 7% from governors and 20% from members of the community.
- 5.29 231 respondents replied to the question on designated area changes. 95 supported the proposed changes in accordance with their chosen option and 136 opposed the proposed changes. Those opposing the change were mainly connected with Fox Hill, The Pines, Wildridings and Wooden Hill primary schools.
- 5.30 The response form also allowed an opportunity for additional comments. Of the comments received, the most frequent (74) was in favour of option 3 of the original 8 options (as detailed in the technical background document). This option proposed:
- a) amalgamation of The Pines Infant and Juniors to a 210 place school on the Junior School site;
 - b) reduction of Birch Hill Primary School to a 420 place school;

- c) reduction of Wooden Hill to a 210 place school; and
- d) reduction of Crown Wood to a 210 place school.

5.31 This comment was particularly popular with those who did not select a preferred option on the standard response sheet. The first two parts to this option are the same as Option 1, the Council's preferred option, but it does not include the amalgamation of Fox Hill and Wildridings schools.

5.32 Other comments and reasons given against pursuing the options proposed were:

- Option chosen causes least disruption
- Causing distress to pupils
- The schools under consideration have excellent academic standards
- The options affect the level of traffic and the distance to travel to school
- The options have an impact on the size of classes and the requirement for additional accommodation
- The options affect schools that have recently been refurbished and have new facilities or provide after school care
- The school is a community asset
- More pupils will be generated by new housing in the area
- The options affect oversubscribed schools
- There will be a cost for parents of new uniforms arising from an amalgamation
- Concerns over the use of the school land and the sale of land to developers for housing
- There will be a loss of jobs and good teachers will be lost.

5.33 347 letters were received from individuals, governing bodies and organisations:

- 58% related to Fox Hill
- 35% related to Wooden Hill
- 7% related to Wildridings, The Pines, Great Hollands and St Margaret Clitherow schools

5.34 The comments were similar to those listed above with a further 133 comments (38%) in support of Option 3 of the original 8 options.

5.35 545 copies of a standard letter in support of Wooden Hill Primary school were received. This had been prepared and distributed by the School. 23% of these were sent in by parents staff and governors and 77% were from 'friends' of Wooden Hill School.

5.36 3 petitions were received:

- a) opposing the closure of Fox Hill Primary School 861 signatures
- b) opposing the closure of Fox Hill and Wildridings schools 224 signatures
- c) opposing the closure of Wooden Hill/ reduction of Crown Wood Primary School 2038 signatures

5.37 The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel also took a very active part in the Review and consultation process. The Panel received presentations on pupil number forecasting methodology and the School Organisation Plan as well as on the Review of Primary School Places in South Bracknell and the consultation process. The Panel visited all schools concerned in each of the options and made a considered response to the consultation. It addresses the issues to be taken into consideration and makes some

recommendations, though it does not advocate any particular option. The report is attached at Annex B.

Points raised during the consultation and the LEA's response

- 5.38 There were a number of detailed points raised during the consultation process; through letters, response forms and in meetings. These are summarised in Annex C, along with the LEA's response to each point.

Conclusion

- 5.39 The spread of responses from all these sources can be summarised in the following table:

Analysis of Standard Response Forms and Letters					
	<i>Option 1</i>	<i>Option 2</i>	<i>Option 3</i>	<i>Other (old option 3)</i>	Total
Amalgamate Fox Hill and Wildridings schools	124	18			142
Amalgamate The Pines Infant and Junior schools	124			74	198
Reduce the size of Birch Hill Primary school	124	18		74	216
Reduce the size of Crown Wood Primary school		18	41	74	133
Close Wooden Hill Primary School			41		41
Reduce the size of Wooden Hill Primary School				74	74
Retain Fox Hill as 1 FE school				209	209
Retain Wooden Hill Primary School				661	661

- 5.40 This shows that although most respondents support Option 1, there is less support for the amalgamation of Wildridings and Fox Hill Primary schools as part of this Option. In addition, there was a substantial response in favour of a variation to this by retaining Fox Hill and Wildridings as separate schools (209 letters and two petitions opposing the amalgamation of to Fox Hill and Wildridings).
- 5.41 There is no real opposition to reducing the size of Birch Hill Primary School, providing that the nursery class is retained in a separate building.
- 5.42 Apart from the evidence of the public meeting, there is also little formal opposition to the amalgamation of the Pines Infant and Juniors (only 9 letters were received opposing the amalgamation).
- 5.43 There is no significant support for Option 2 or Option 3.

- 5.44 In addition, there is strong opposition to the closure of Wooden Hill Primary School under Option 3; 116 letters, 545 standard letters and one petition opposed its closure.

Proposed school organisation

- 5.45 The rationale for change is still clear and accepted in general terms by many respondents. There are two key issues that have arisen during the consultation and which have influenced the recommended solution to the number of surplus places in South Bracknell.

- a) Having listened carefully to all the points made during the consultation, particularly the strong views in favour of retaining a school for each community, it is not proposed to remove any school from an existing community area.
- b) There are still uncertainties about the number of pupils who will be living in the north of the area in the medium to long term. The Council may wish to retain greater flexibility over the future use of school buildings.

- 5.46 The Borough Council's assessment of the benefits of the recommended pattern of school organisation therefore offsets any loss in projected savings that the education budget and consequently the pupils of South Bracknell would have achieved under the Borough Council's preferred option. It meets the objectives listed in paragraph 5.9. and still releases significant separate accommodation that can be realistically removed from school use.

- 5.47 Therefore, the following pattern of changes to the organisation of school in South Bracknell is recommended:

- a) The Staff College Site be solely within the designated area of Harmans Water Primary School, as in Annex F.**

This pattern of designated area is reasonable and complies with government guidelines regarding single school designated areas. However, should the number of houses eventually agreed for the Staff College site significantly exceed the current planned figure, then this arrangement may have to be reviewed. Any further review would have to be carried out in time to influence admissions.

- b) The Pines Infant and The Pines Junior Schools be amalgamated to create a 210 place primary school on the Junior School site with effect from 1 September 2005, with a planned admission number of 30 with effect from 1 January 2006. Arrangements for changes in the accommodation be the subject of a further report for consultation with the governing bodies.**

The accommodation of the pupils at the school in the medium term can be through two different types of accommodation; either staying in the existing infant building and gradually using less accommodation in that building as the smaller intake moves through or through the addition of temporary modular accommodation in the Junior school site. In either situation the nursery can be accommodated within the main school building rather than in modular accommodation. There are real organisational and operational advantages and disadvantages of each option and these would need discussion with the governing bodies.

The accommodation of the Infant School building is released on the school site for an alternative use, whilst safeguarding the use of the community room by the Church at the Pines.

- c) Fox Hill Primary School be reduced to a 210 place primary school with a planned admission number of 30 with effect from 1 January 2006. The School be based in the Key Stage 2 building with effect from 1 September 2005. Arrangements for changes to the accommodation at Fox Hill be the subject of a further report for consultation with the governing body. Some changes be made to the designated area for the School. It will no longer include the Staff College site and the area in the north bordered by the Bagshot Road and Broad Lane be solely within the designated area of Harmans Water Primary School.**

This proposal follows the suggestion of the Governing Body of Fox Hill School. It retains the future flexibility of a school on the site and releases additional accommodation for an alternative use. The school can be accommodated in the Key Stage 2 building and the nursery remains in the Key Stage 1 building along with the kitchen. More detailed discussions are required with the Governing Body regarding the practical aspects of accommodation use.

- d) Wildridings Primary School be reduced to a 315 place primary with a planned admission number of 45 with effect from 1 January 2006. Arrangements for the removal of 90 places be the subject of further consultation with the Governing Body. The designated area of the School will no longer include the Staff College site.**

Without amalgamation with Fox Hill Primary School, it is not possible to sustain Wildridings at its current size and achieve the required reduction in surplus places. The School would lose one single modular classroom and two other classrooms would need to be identified for an alternative use. This would reduce the number of places at the School by 90. Exactly how this is to be achieved would be discussed with the Governing Body. Accordingly the planned admission number for the school would reduce to 45.

- e) The accommodation at Birch Hill Primary School be reduced to 449 places, preferably 420 places, as soon as circumstances allow, with a planned admission number of 60 being published for the school with effect from 1 January 2006.**

Remodelling of the School has already been identified as a high priority for 2003/4 due to the unsuitable nature of some classrooms. It is intended to use this as an opportunity to achieve part of the reduction in places required with the objective of the school becoming a 420 place school. Further remodelling may be required to ensure complete suitability of accommodation and a further reduction in classrooms. This can be achieved without requiring the Nursery to move into the main school building and also by retaining a small classroom to support the inclusion project currently run in conjunction with Kennel Lane School.

- 5.48 The total effect of all the recommended changes would be to remove 505 places and reduce the surplus to 14.76 % by 2008 (13.3 % if children from out side of South Bracknell remain in these schools). This figure does not include the pupils from the Staff College site who would already be starting to attend Harmans Water Primary School and pupils from the Peacock Farm development who would be encouraged to attend Great Hollands Primary school until their school is built.

5.49 This recommendation meets the Council's objective of removing over 500 surplus places from South Bracknell.

Revenue Costs/ Savings

5.50 A summary of the revenue costs/savings of each option are attached at Annex D. Each option comprises:

- net savings to the individual schools concerned
- savings to central government
- savings to the education budget which would be distributed to all schools

5.51 In summary the combined savings to Bracknell Forest Borough Council Education Budget and schools under each option are:

Option	Total recurrent annual saving £
Option 1	222,000
Option 2	164,000
Option 3	181,000
Proposed solution	129,000

5.52 Under current national funding arrangements, these savings would be redistributed to all schools, where they fall within the Schools Block, and to the individual school concerned where appropriate, as indicated in Annex D.

5.53 In the first year of implementation there may also be redundancy/redeployment costs. Given the difficult recruitment situation in Bracknell Forest it is anticipated that these would be fairly low as most staff could be redeployed.

5.54 The amalgamation of the Pines Infant and Junior Schools will also incur one off revenue costs.

Accommodation and Capital Costs

5.55 An analysis of the accommodation implications of each option is included at Annex E. A feasibility study has been carried out to ascertain exactly how each of the options can be put into effect and the costs of each.

5.56 Within the costs an allowance has been made for inflation until tendering takes place in 2004/5. It is also assumed that any modular classrooms will be taken from other sites in the Borough and the costs allow for removal, installation, connection of services and reinstatement after removal. These costs are still approximate.

Option 1

Amalgamate Wildridings and Fox Hill

- 5.57 As an interim arrangement, this would require the addition of 3 (1 single and 1 double) modular classrooms on the Wildridings site for 3 years. In addition the nursery would have to increase by a single modular classroom and a link provided to the existing nursery classroom.
Cost £330,000

Amalgamate The Pines Infants and The Pines Juniors

- 5.58 The nursery would have to be relocated into the Junior school building. There are sufficient classrooms available to do this and retain a one form entry school. The infants would be located in an existing wing of the junior building with some adaptations.
- 5.59 A small amount of additional hard play area would be required and relocation of existing play facilities.
- 5.60 The entrance, office and staffroom accommodation in the Junior building would also require some modification.
- 5.61 As an interim arrangement, this would require an additional 3 or 4 modular classrooms on the Junior School site for 3 years.
- 5.62 Alternatively, the infant pupils could remain in the infant building for 3 years using a reducing number of classrooms each year. However, this may be difficult to operate organisationally and there will be an opportunity cost in terms of being able to use the building for an alternative use.

Costs

£85,000 for adaptations to the Junior School to become a primary school
£100,000 for adaptations to the entrance and staff room and admin facilities
£230,000 for provision of modular accommodation on the Junior school site or
£30,000 to retain the use of the infant building.

Reduce Birch Hill Primary School to a 420 pupil school

- 5.63 The School is included in the current year capital programme for internal remodelling to improve the suitability and size of the classrooms. Future remodelling work would be required to improve the suitability and size of the remaining classrooms. This will reduce the number of classrooms and allow for the removal of the double modular building. There will be a room available to continue the inclusion project with Kennel Lane School. There would be no requirement to move the nursery in order to achieve the desired reduction in places.

Costs

£42,000 Removal of modular accommodation
£320,000 Remodelling of infant area

Total estimated capital costs for option 1 = £1,107,000 or £907,000

Option 2

Amalgamate Wildridings and Fox Hill

- 5.64 As an interim arrangement, this would require the addition of 3 (1 single and 1 double) modular classrooms on the Wildridings site for 3 years. In addition the nursery would have to increase by a single modular classroom and a link provided to the existing nursery classroom.
Cost £330,000

Reduce Birch Hill Primary School to a 420 pupil school

- 5.65 The School is included in the current year capital programme for internal remodelling to improve the suitability and size of the classrooms. Future remodelling work would be required to improve the suitability and size of the remaining classrooms. This will reduce the number of classrooms and allow for the removal of the double modular building. There will be a room available to continue the inclusion project with Kennel Lane School. There would be no requirement to move the nursery in order to achieve the desired reduction in places.

Costs

£42,000 Removal of modular accommodation
£320,000 Remodelling of infant area

Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school

- 5.66 This can only be achieved by removing all modular accommodation, which comprises classrooms and offices, and remodelling the permanent accommodation to ensure that all rooms are suitable and of an appropriate size.

Costs

£85,000 for removal of modular buildings
£ 550,000 for remodelling internal areas

Total estimated capital costs for option 2 = £1,327,000

Option 3

Close Wooden Hill School

- 5.67 This has implications for Great Hollands Primary School, if parents choose to send their children there.
- 5.68 To accommodate all the Great Hollands designated area pupils from Wooden Hill Primary School, Great Hollands Primary School would require an additional 3 modular classrooms (1 single and 1 double).

Costs

£230,000 for provision of modular accommodation

Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school

- 5.69 This can only be achieved by removing all modular accommodation, which comprises classrooms and offices, and remodelling the permanent accommodation to ensure that all rooms are suitable and of an appropriate size.

Costs

£85,000 for removal of modular buildings

£550,000 for remodelling internal areas

Total estimated capital costs for option 3 = £865,000

Proposed school organisation

Reduce Fox Hill to a 210 place school in the Key stage 2 building

- 5.70 This can be achieved already in terms of pupil numbers. However, the staff room will need to be relocated from the Key stage 1 building. The kitchen and nursery will remain in the Key stage 1 building.

Costs

£70,000 for provision of new staffroom

Reduce Wildridings to a 315 place school

- 5.71 The single modular classroom on the site would be removed and 2 further classrooms within the main building (Key stage 1 area) identified for an alternative use.

Costs

£42,000 for removal of modular accommodation

Amalgamate The Pines Infants and The Pines Juniors

- 5.72 The nursery would have to be relocated into the Junior school building. There are sufficient classrooms available to do this and retain a one form entry school. The infants would be located in an existing wing of the junior building with some adaptations.
- 5.73 A small amount of additional hard play area would be required and relocation of existing play facilities.
- 5.74 The entrance, office and staffroom accommodation in the Junior building would also require some modification.
- 5.75 As an interim arrangement, this would require an additional 3 or 4 modular classrooms on the Junior School site for 3 years.
- 5.76 Alternatively, the infant pupils could remain in the infant building for 3 years using a reducing number of classrooms each year. However, this may be difficult to operate

organisationally and there will be an opportunity cost in terms of being able to use the building for an alternative use.

Costs

£85,000 for adaptations to the Junior School to become a primary school
£100,000 for adaptations to the entrance and staff room and admin facilities
£230,000 for provision of modular accommodation on the Junior school site or
£30,000 to retain the use of the infant building.

Reduce Birch Hill Primary School to a 420 pupil school

- 5.77 The School is included in the current year capital programme for internal remodelling to improve the suitability and size of the classrooms. Future remodelling work would be required to improve the suitability and size of the remaining classrooms. This will reduce the number of classrooms and allow for the removal of the double modular building. There will be a room available to continue the inclusion project with Kennel Lane School. There would be no requirement to move the nursery in order to achieve the desired reduction in places.

Costs

£42,000 Removal of modular accommodation
£320,000 Remodelling of infant area

Total estimated capital costs for proposed solution = £889,000 or £689,000

Next Steps

- 5.78 This paper will be considered by the Full Council on 21 January and the comments of the Full Council will be reported to the Executive Member for Education on 3 February, when he will take the decision to proceed with the proposed solution to the issue of surplus primary places in South Bracknell. Following that decision, the Borough Council can publish statutory notices for the proposed changes. Following the determination of these by the Executive Member, these changes will then be recommended to the School Organisation Committee. Should agreement to the proposals then be secured, the implementation of the reorganisation can commence with the required changes to buildings and the appropriate governing body and staff consultations. A temporary governing body will be established for The Pines Primary School to oversee the establishment of the new school.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 provides a framework for new arrangements for local decision making on issues relating to school organisation and for Regulations to provide more detail.
- 6.2 The Education (School Organisation Plan) Regulations, the Education (School Organisation Committee) Regulations and the Education (School Adjudicators' Procedure) Regulations all came into force in 1999.

- 6.3 Following the decision by the Executive Member for Education, there will need to be a statutory consultation on the proposals, following the publishing of statutory notices. After this period the Executive Member for Education may, in the light of the statutory consultation response, determine to proceed. This would then require the approval of the School Organisation Committee. If there is a dispute about the final decision, it can be referred by any interested party to the School's Adjudicator.

Borough Finance Officer

- 6.4 There are significant financial implications arising from this Review.
- 6.5 In respect of the revenue budget, all the options identify on-going revenue savings, as a reduction in the total number of schools will result in a lower overall budget allocation through the Funding Formula for Schools. Statutory regulations require that any such saving be retained within school budgets. One-off costs associated with the amalgamation of the Pines Infant and Junior schools will need to be funded from the initial savings.
- 6.6 In the short term there are likely to be one-off costs associated with premature retirement, redundancy and redeployment costs. There is also the likelihood that some on-going pension liabilities will also need to be funded. Such costs will fall on the LEA budget and will need to be included in the 2005/06 budget proposals.
- 6.7 The draft capital programme for 2004/05 includes £300,000 with a further £50,000 allocated for 2005/06. The funding available for 2005/06 will need to be increased in line with the recommendation. However, there may also be scope to use government grant funding and/or capital receipts to support the cost of these works.

Access Implications

- 6.8 Access implications, where appropriate, will be taken into account in the development of plans for each school building.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The groups consulted during the consultation period were Bracknell Forest schools' head teachers and governing bodies, diocesan authorities, members of the School Organisation Committee, Bracknell and Wokingham College, teacher associations, neighbouring LEAs and the Berkshire Learning and Skills Council, early years settings and members of the local community.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Notice published in the local paper; consultation document sent to all interested parties, local meetings held, website contained all documentation and electronic response form. Representations were sent in writing to the Director of Education.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Included in the body of the report.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest School Organisation Plan 2003 - 2008

Consultation leaflet and technical background document - November 2003

Notes of public meetings - November 2003

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Doc. Ref

00 South Bracknell Review

South Bracknell Review – Results of Consultation

Responses to the consultation exercise were received in a number of different formats and through a variety of channels. It should be noted that the statistics below are likely to contain an element of duplication as consultees were entitled to respond by using more than one format.

The consultation was conducted during November and December 2003. The results are set out below, split by the four main response types (standard response form, letters (and e-mails), proforma letter (Wooden Hill Primary School) and names on petitions):

- **Standard Response Forms**

A total of 4,800 standard response forms (questionnaires) were distributed as part of a printed document providing background information on the consultation.

343 completed forms were received, representing a 7% response rate.

Support for the various options that were proposed was as follows:

124 (36%) selected Option 1
 18 (5%) selected Option 2
 41 (12%) selected Option 3
 150 (44%) did not select an option
 10 (3%) voted for more than one option

Almost two thirds (258) of the 343 responses were from parents, mostly from Wooden Hill and Fox Hill schools, with 39 from school staff (both teaching and support), 26 from governors and 80 from 'members of the community'. It is important to note that there is some duplication in these numbers as people classified themselves as both 'parents' and 'members of the community' thus although 343 people actually submitted forms, the number of responses in the analysis totals more than this.

Responses to Options by type of respondent

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Multiple options selected	No option selected
Parents	98	16	30	6	108
School Staff	13	1	3	1	21
Governors	7	1	2	-	16
Members of the Community	23	1	13	5	38
Total*	141	19	48	12	183

* NB total more than 343 due to some duplication of categories

Responses to Options by school

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	No Option selected
Birch Hill	6	-	3	1
Brakenhale	-	-	-	2
Crown Wood	22	-	-	1
Fox Hill	-	-	3	69
Great Hollands Schools	4	1	1	6
The Pines Schools	1	10	20	19
Ranelagh	-	-	-	2
St Michael's Easthampstead	8	-	1	2
Wildridings	8	-	6	17
Wooden Hill	52	3	-	9
Total*	101	14	34	128

*NB not all respondents stipulated a specific school

Where possible, the comments contained in the standard response forms have been classified. The following reasons were quoted by respondents in support of their arguments.

Category	No. of comments
Favours 'option 3 of the original 8'	74
Least disruption overall (NB 20 of these selected Option 1)	22
Causes distress to pupils	16
Schools under consideration have excellent academic standards	15
Options impact traffic and distance to travel	11
Options impact class-sizes and need for additional accommodation	9

Recent Refurbishment/ facilities/ after school care	8
School represents asset to the community	6
New housing moving to the area, will generate more pupils	6
Options affect an already over-subscribed school	5
Cost of uniform for parents resulting from amalgamations	2
Concern over land use, selling off land to developers	1
Schools have good teachers who may face job losses	1

Designated Areas

Many people did not complete the section of the form which asked about changes to designated areas. However, of the 231 respondents who did answer this section, 95 (41%) supported the proposed changes to school designated areas and 136 (59%) opposed the changes.

These were split by school as follows:

	Yes	No
Birch Hill	11	2
Crown Wood	13	5
Fox Hill	1	46
Great Hollands Schools	6	5
The Pines Schools	6	21
St Michael's Easthampstead	6	2
Wildridings	8	14
Wooden Hill	27	29
Total*	78	124

**NB not everyone who responded to this question stated a specific school*

Of the 95 respondents who were in favour of the changes to the Designated Areas, they supported the options as follows:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Options 1 & 2	No Option selected	Total
61	9	16	6	3	95

- **Letters**

In total 347 letters (and e-mails) were received. The majority were from individuals, however the correspondence received from groups eg governing bodies or other organisations is listed below:

- Governing Body of Birch Hill Primary School
- Governing Body of Fox Hill Primary School
- Headteacher of Fox Hill Primary School
- Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals – Paediatric Dept (re Fox Hill)
- Parent Representatives of Fox Hill Primary School
- Chairman of Governors, Great Hollands Junior School
- Bracknell Town Councillor for Great Hollands South
- The Pines Junior School Governing Body
- Governor, The Pines Junior School
- The Church @ the Pines
- Deputy Headteacher, The Pines Junior School
- Governing Body of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School
- Governing Body of Wildridings Primary School
- Governor and Teaching Assistant (Wooden Hill)
- Bracknell Forest Labour Group
- Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel
- National Union of Teachers (Bracknell Forest Association)
- Education Planning Officer, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

The table below shows the breakdown by individual school:

School	No. of Letters
Fox Hill	195
Wooden Hill	116
Wildridings	14
The Pines Schools	9
Great Hollands	1

Schools	
St Margaret Clitherow	1
Total*	336

**NB not all letters were sent on behalf of a specific school*

As shown above, the majority of letters related to Fox Hill (58%) and Wooden Hill (35%), with only 4% relating to Wildridings and just under 3% to The Pines.

The comments contained in the letters and e-mails have been classified under the headings below:

Category	No. of comments
Options impact traffic and distance to travel	164
Causes distress to pupils	154
Favours option 3 of the original 8	133
Schools under consideration have excellent academic standards	131
Options impact class-sizes and need for additional accommodation	109
Schools have good teachers who may face job losses	96
Recent Refurbishment/ facilities/ after school care	83
School represents asset to the community	72
Cost of uniform for parents resulting from amalgamations	52
New housing moving to the area, will generate more pupils	44
Options affect an already over-subscribed school	38
Concern over land use, selling off land to developers	16

- **Proforma letter (Wooden Hill Primary School)**

545 copies were received of a proforma letter prepared and distributed by Wooden Hill School headed up 'Opposing the closure of Wooden Hill Primary School and the reduction of Crown Wood School to a 210 place school'.

Respondents were required to sign and date the letter and state their relationship to Wooden Hill School (*parent / member of staff / governor / friend*). This section regarding their relationship with the school was completed by 437 out of the 545 respondents. Of these 437, over three quarters (77%) were 'friends' with 'parents, staff and governors' representing the remaining 23%.

	No.	%
Friends	336	77%
Parents	89	20%
Governor	6	1%
Member of Staff	6	1%

- **Names on petitions**

A number of petitions were received, consisting of name, address and signature. Some of the signatures were from outside Bracknell Forest and there was no indication of their relationship to any particular school.

A total of 3123 signatures were received as follows:

Opposing closure of Fox Hill

'Save our School...Fox Hill. We the undersigned do not want Fox Hill Primary School to close'

861 names

Opposing closure of Wildridings / Fox Hill

'We the undersigned:

- *do NOT wish Wildridings Primary School to close as part of an amalgamation with Fox Hill Primary School*
- *Do NOT support any options which mean that Wildridings loses its name, its uniform or its Headteacher'*

224 names

Opposing closure of Wooden Hill /reduction of Crown Wood Primary

'I am totally opposed to Option 3:

- *To close Wooden Hill Primary School*
- *Reduce Crown Wood Primary to a 210 place school'*

2038 names

RESPONSE TO THE EXECUTIVE

19 DECEMBER 2003

SOUTH BRACKNELL SCHOOLS REVIEW

RESPONSE TO THE EXECUTIVE FROM THE LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This response provides the Executive with our (the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel's) views on the South Bracknell Schools Review. We have not opted for or against any of the specific options in the consultation document, but have submitted a range of broader comments and views to assist the Executive in taking a fully informed decision on the outcome of the Review on 20 January 2004.
- 1.2 In taking account of our response, the Executive may wish to note that a number of the Panel Members have interests as governors of schools included in the Review. The advice of the Borough Solicitor on this matter is that such an interest does not preclude us from responding to the consultation on the Review.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 To inform our discussions and consideration of the issues raised by the Review of primary school places in South Bracknell, the Education Department helpfully provided various presentations and background information, including details of school rolls and predicted pupil numbers in future years. We also had an informative discussion with the Director of Education about the options for reorganisation of primary schools in South Bracknell, including seeing the presentation that was used as part of the wider consultation through public meetings in local schools.
- 2.2 Many of us also went on visits to seven of the school sites most affected by the 3 options in the consultation document¹, both to look at the actual sites and school accommodation and also to talk briefly to the head teachers. Similarly several of us have also been to some of the public meetings to observe this part of the wider consultation exercise and the public's reaction.
- 2.3 Some of us as constituency councillors have received various representations and comments from our constituents (particularly parents of children at the schools covered by the Review), we have taken account of these as a legitimate input in our response to the Executive, but have not given them undue weight.

¹ School sites visited by Panel Members were: Birch Hill Primary, Crown Wood Primary, Fox Hill Primary, The Pines Infant & Junior Schools, Wildridings Primary and Wooden Hill Primary Schools

3 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- 3.1 We recognise the need for action to reduce the number of surplus school places across South Bracknell given the current trend in falling school rolls which is predicted to continue over at least the next five years, resulting in a significant level of surplus places in our schools.
- 3.2 We also wanted to acknowledge the high standards of education provided in all of the schools visited (indeed we noted that the LEA also considers them to be good having received satisfactory Ofsted inspections). We therefore think that it is important to ensure that local people are clear that the Review is driven by the need to reduce around 800 surplus primary school places in South Bracknell by 2008 and does not imply any criticism of the standards of performance or education offered by any of the schools.
- 3.3 We observed that the standard of the accommodation varied greatly between individual schools, as did the number of empty classrooms. There was also variation in the style of accommodation at different schools (e.g. permanent or temporary, closed or open-plan). Similarly, each school has its own particular specialism or unique feature e.g. the language and literacy unit at Crown Wood and the nursery unit at Birch Hill. We believe the variety and choice that this provides for pupils and parents is a good thing and should be retained if at all possible.
- 3.4 Finally we believe that whenever local people, particularly parents, are faced with a Review that includes the potential for school closure or amalgamation, there will always be some who are disappointed at the outcome. It is therefore essential that we consider the outcome and any transitional arrangements very carefully to minimise the impact on pupils and their education. It is crucial that we continue to make every effort to keep parents, schools and pupils on board whatever the outcome of the Review.

4 ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Having considered the reasons for the Review and the options proposed to address them, we want to flag up a number of issues for the Executive to consider when taking a decision on the Review. These include:
- (i) ***Schools should only be closed as a matter of last resort.*** We found all the schools included in the review to be good schools, many having benefited from much work and investment. They are all valued highly by their local communities. A decision to close any of the schools will be extremely difficult and we consider that this should be a matter of last resort and avoided if at all possible.
 - (ii) ***The desirability of providing a school in each community.*** At present we have a primary school in every community in South Bracknell. Some options in the Review threaten this. Furthermore, the schools provide a community focus and facilities that are used by many other groups and organisations (including the Scouts & Guides and indeed the LEA). We believe that this is important to retain and our preference would be to reduce the size of schools on current sites rather than close a community school.

- (iii) **Taking account of wider factors:** Whilst accepting that the review is about addressing a specific need to reduce surplus primary school places, we felt it was important to consider wider factors as part of this process. We think that all relevant factors, including the views of the community and longer-term strategic implications for school provision across Bracknell Forest, should be taken into account as part of this exercise.
- (iv) **Considering cost implications:** We think it important to have information on the costs of the various options (including the longer-term implementation) well in advance of the decision being taken on the outcome of the Review. We are concerned that this may not be the case, particularly on the capital cost implications. It is important that any schools affected by the outcome of the Review are adequately funded to ensure their future viability.
- (v) **Retaining flexibility for future changes in pupil numbers:** We know that the number of pupils on the school roll varies over time and can be influenced by a range of factors including the impact of new housing development. Whilst current predictions are for a significant reduction in school places across South Bracknell in the medium term, we must also ensure that we keep sufficient flexibility within our school provision to cope with future fluctuations (particularly were numbers to subsequently rise again or not decline as rapidly as is currently predicted).
- (vi) **Taking account of pressure for future increases in housing density:** We noted that anticipated numbers of pupils coming from new housing developments that are planned in South Bracknell are included in the predictions for school rolls. But we remain concerned about the knock-on effects of continuing pressure (including from the Government) to increase the density of housing development, particularly in the south-east of England. Further pressure to increase the number of properties planned for existing development sites or to encourage further in-fill development could result in greater demand for school places than we are anticipating. We need to retain sufficient flexibility within our school provision to accommodate such changes.
- (vii) **Desirability of long-term planning:** Changes to school provision have a great impact on the lives of pupils and their families. We think we should look at the demand for school places over the medium to longer term (at least 5-10 years), not just the short term (2-3 years).

5 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER

5.1 In addition to the general points above we want to bring a number of more specific issues to the attention of the Executive. These include:

- (i) **The designated area for the Staff College site:** We are aware that several primary schools currently have designated areas that overlap the Staff College site. The Review proposes including the Staff College site within the designated area for Harmans Water Primary School. However we would like the Executive to also consider splitting the Staff College site between the designated areas for Fox Hill, Wildridings and/or Harmans Water primary schools to help reduce future pressure on places at Harmans Water Primary. This would of course need to take account of geographic and accessibility factors relating to pupils' travel to school arrangements.

- (ii) ***The size of primary schools we provide:*** We see an inherent conflict between the pressure to have a small number of larger schools (e.g. with at least a 2 form entry) for reasons of efficiency and economy and the parents' desire to send their children to smaller schools (e.g. of 210 pupils or less). Our preference is to retain the variety of provision so parents have a degree of choice. The Review provides the council with an opportunity to take a decision on this and make a clear statement about the type of school provision we want to provide and why.
 - (iii) ***The range of facilities and style of accommodation:*** Similarly there are issues about the choice of accommodation and facilities offered at different schools sites. Again we are keen to retain this element of variety and choice, for example by continuing to provide an opportunity for separate facilities for infant and junior age education (whether on separate sites as we currently do at the Pines Infant and Junior Schools or through separate provision on the same site), including nursery provision (as at Birch Hill) or making use of open plan accommodation (as at Wooden Hill). The key concern must be that whatever facilities we provide they are suitable for providing the best education possible for the young people of Bracknell.
 - (iv) ***Possibility of retaining the Fox Hill site:*** We think that the Executive should explore the possibility of not closing Fox Hill School. This would retain the flexibility to bring it back into service if the Staff College site is developed to a higher density than currently anticipated.
6. We would like to conclude by emphasising the importance of keeping, parents, schools and pupils on board following the consultation period and throughout the subsequent implementation, irrespective of the final decision. We look forward to following this up with the Executive, perhaps at a future Panel meeting, to obtain feedback on the outcome of consultation and on plans for implementing any chosen option.

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

19 December 2003

Contacts for further information

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Points Raised During the Consultation and The LEA's Response

There were a number of detailed points raised during the consultation process; through letters, response forms and in meetings. These are summarised below along with the LEA's response to each point.

Option 1 – the Council's preferred option

a) The amalgamation of Fox Hill and Wildridings Primary schools on the Wildridings site.

Comment: *This option would close a local school and remove a community focus from the Easthampstead area. It reduces future flexibility and restricts parental choice.*

LEA response: This option would close Fox Hill School and change the community focus to the new school on the Wildridings site. Parents would still have the opportunity to choose a place at any school, providing there were sufficient places available. The outcome of the Review would still leave an overall surplus of places of over 10 % in South Bracknell

Comment: *Many of the children at Fox Hill Primary School have special needs and need the caring supportive environment of a small school.*

LEA response: The new School on the Wildridings site would be larger initially, but eventually would be 420 pupils. This is 100 pupils more than Fox Hill School if it were full. Schools of this size in the Borough are well able to provide an appropriate environment for pupils with special needs.

Comment: *Wildridings is too far for many parents to walk from Fox Hill, especially if accompanied by toddlers. They may have to do this journey many times a day if they have a child in nursery.*

LEA response: Measured by radial distance, the Wildridings site is half a mile away from the Fox Hill site. However, by closest walking route it would be further than half a mile. It is 1.5 miles from the furthest point of the Fox Hill designated area.

Comment: *The problem of parking at the Wildridings site could be very problematic as currently Fox Hill parents use a variety of parking locations then walk to the School.*

LEA response: The LEA would encourage as many parents as possible to bring their children to school without using cars, and all schools are now expected to produce travel plans to achieve this. However, it is inevitable that there may be increased pressure on parking facilities at the Wildridings site.

Comment: *The quality of teaching and support staff at Fox Hill School is very high and the children should continue to benefit from their expertise.*

LEA response: An amalgamation with Wildridings would seek to retain as many of the staff of both schools as possible in order to provide a smooth education transfer for the pupils. There are only a limited number of posts at risk in an amalgamation, one of which is the head teacher's post, as this can only be given to one person.

Comment: *Fox Hill Primary School actively encourages lifelong learning amongst parents and has piloted many innovative ICT projects for the LEA.*

LEA response: Bracknell Forest Schools excel in different areas and have their own distinct character. It would be for the new school on the Wildridings site to build on the existing strengths of both Fox Hill and Wildridings.

Comment: *The accommodation of Wildridings Primary School is not as good as Fox Hill Primary school.*

LEA response: Fox Hill Primary has recently had a major remodelling as the previous accommodation was not suitable for the teaching of the national curriculum. The accommodation at Wildridings does not have similar suitability problems which impact on pupils' education. Unlike Fox Hill it has not benefited from a major redecoration programme in the last 3 years.

Comment: *There may be more houses built on the Staff College site than are currently planned and Fox Hill would be the next closest school accessible through underpasses from the development site. Many pupils currently use these underpasses.*

LEA response: The Council has an adopted policy within the Local Plan for 730 houses on the Staff College site. The Local Plan has been the subject of wide consultation and has been legally adopted. The accommodation at Harmans Water could accommodate more children from the Staff College site than are currently planned, but not a significant increase (a large number would in future be displaced to Crown Wood Primary).

Comment: *There are more houses planned in the Town Centre and places will be required for these pupils.*

LEA response: The majority of dwelling planned in the town centre are flats, which will probably produce primary age pupils but not secondary pupils. This area is currently in the designated area of Sandy Lane Primary and there are no plans to change this.

Comment: *The amalgamation of Fox Hill and Wildridings Schools should not be achieved through the closure of both schools and the opening of a new school on the Wildridings site, but by the closure of Fox Hill School only and an extension to the size of Wildridings School, in order to minimise the disruption and recruitment and retention difficulties to staff and pupils, and the blight that comes with school closure. This will impact on standards.*

LEA response

The LEA has proposed a completely new school because this allows the contribution made by both schools to receive equal recognition and gives an impetus for a new school serving both communities whilst building on the strengths of both existing schools. It also ensures fairer and equitable treatment of all staff. The majority of staff would transfer to a post in the new school. This does not involve applying for these posts but a process of slotting into the posts in the new school. This approach has the agreement of the unions. It is anticipated that any redundancies would be minimal as the new school would need a similar number of teachers and support staff as are currently in both existing schools. All pupils would be transferred to the new school. Amalgamation also allows a new governing body to be established from both existing schools' governing bodies that would have the interests of the pupils in the new school as its main purpose.

Comment: *Amalgamation would incur unnecessary costs for the school and parents in terms of new name plates and stationery and uniforms.*

LEA response: Decisions on names, letterheads and uniforms are for the temporary governing body to determine. There are ways of phasing in changes so as to minimise costs e.g. sticky labels on stationery, phasing in a new uniform or making it encompass elements of both previous schools uniforms. The Council may also consider assisting parents in this respect.

b) The amalgamation of The Pines Infants and Juniors on the Junior School site

Comment: *The amalgamation of infant and junior schools to form primary schools disrupts children's education and decreases the added value in the schools for a short period after the amalgamation. It can also affect the recruitment and retention of staff*

LEA response: Research shows that, nationally, Key Stage 2 results are better from primary schools than Junior schools. There is also significant evidence of improved continuity between Key Stage 1 and 2 in primary schools, as opposed to separate infant and junior schools. The level of disruption involved depends how well the amalgamation is managed and planned. It is important to retain the confidence of staff in the new arrangements and secure their job continuity.

Comment: *One form of entry lacks flexibility in school organisation to teach in targeted groups.*

LEA response: There are 12 one form entry primary schools in the Borough. Many of these have adopted a targeted group approach for some lessons.

Comment: *Nursery children would be disadvantaged by being in a separate building and not integrated into the main school.*

LEA response: There is no requirement for the nursery to be in a separate building. The feasibility study has been carried out on the basis that the nursery could be in a separate building or could be part of the main school building. Different schools have different views as to their preference.

Comment: *The reduction in the school size, eventually to 210 pupils, would make it less attractive to new staff.*

LEA response: The Junior School currently has 200 on roll and the Infants 150 on roll. Both schools are currently smaller than the planned amalgamated school. In addition, as there would be only one head teacher and one administrative office required, the fixed costs of the new school would be less than that of the existing schools, which would allow more funds to be used for pupil education.

Comment: *Some staff prefer to teach in a separate key stage only to allow in depth specialism.*

LEA response: This is true but arguably it is important for all staff to have a full knowledge of the learning continuum, as there can be a spread of pupil knowledge and understanding in every year group which crosses numerical ages. An in depth specialist knowledge is still possible in a primary school but in addition it is also easier to broaden a teacher's experience in this type of setting.

Comment: *Two teachers in a year group provide good support for Newly Qualified Teachers.*

LEA response: There are also alternative models of support for NQTS which can operate in a one form entry school.

Comment: *Some parents prefer separate Infant and Junior schools.*

LEA response

Whilst this is true, evidence shows that there is improved continuity of education across key stages in primary schools, which benefits children's education.

Comment: *Amalgamation should be a decision for the governors rather than the LEA.*

LEA response: As a policy, the LEA usually allows the governing bodies of separate infant and junior schools to lead on amalgamation matters when a head teacher vacancy arises in one of the schools. However, the LEA has a statutory responsibility with regard to school organisation and, when an area review is carried out, has to consider all options available including amalgamation. In the case of The Pines this is in the context of reducing the size of the school on that site. It would be unreasonable to create two separate one form entry infant and junior schools in order to achieve this reduction. It is only achievable through the amalgamation of both schools.

Comment: *Reducing the size of the school may mean that there are fewer places for children transferring from the nursery and the preschool and for siblings.*

LEA response: Analysis of the home addresses of the current pupils shows that approximately half come from within the designated area for the Pines. The falling numbers on roll predicted at the school should ensure that in the future there are still significant numbers of places for pupils from outside the designated area. Priority will be given to those who already have siblings attending the School. However, there can be no absolute guarantee of a place for all siblings.

Comment: *The alternative use of the Infant school building may have an impact on the safety of children on site particularly around the car park.*

LEA response: When an alternative use is identified this will have to be the subject of consultation with all site users. The safety of pupils will be very important.

Comment: *The designated area of the school should be extended to reflect the social catchment area of the campus.*

LEA response: There are currently surplus places across all schools in South Bracknell and parents already have a significant choice of schools. The number of pupils attending The Pines schools from their designated area is currently approximately 30%. Falling numbers in the future will still allow a number of pupils to attend the school from outside its designated area (up to 50% of the school could still be from outside the designated area). The existing designated area well established has been in existence for several years. It would only be applied should there be insufficient places at either school. There are no proposals to change the existing designated area. The only designated area change proposed through this review is to remove the Staff College site from the areas of Wildridings and Fox Hill primary schools.

Comment: *The wide ranging out of hours use of both buildings would be affected by the amalgamation.*

LEA response: The LEA would endeavour to retain the capacity for existing out of hours use of buildings on the site.

Comment: *The funds spent on improving and purpose designing both schools would have been wasted if their use was changed. The junior school building will have to be redesigned for Key Stage 1 children.*

LEA response

There will have to be some minor modification to the junior school building to ensure that it is adequate for Key Stage 1 pupils. This has been the subject of a feasibility study. There will still be savings in future years.

Comment: *All schools need some additional space to meet the requirements of workforce remodelling and Every Child Matters.*

LEA response: Following the reduction in surplus places in South Bracknell there will still be at least 10% surplus places available for schools to utilise in alternative ways. The LEA is conscious of the requirements of the workforce remodelling agenda and the proposals set out in the Green Paper and will seek to ensure that all schools are able to accommodate these requirements appropriately. This may or may not require additional accommodation.

Comment: *Schools in South Bracknell have chosen to have smaller class sizes due to the increased funding that they receive for social deprivation and special education needs. This would affect the calculation of surplus places.*

LEA response: It is true that these additional sources of funding within their budget allow many schools in South Bracknell to organise to have classes below 30 and still operate within budget and provide a good standard of education. However, where the number of pupils in classes falls below 25, this is difficult to sustain for long periods under current funding arrangements. Some schools trying to maintain this level have fallen into budget deficit. The calculation of surplus places however is nationally prescribed. It can allow for smaller classes. Therefore, the LEA is not proposing to remove all of the surplus places in the area but does have to act to reduce it when that number is expected to exceed 20%.

Comment: *No change is needed at the moment until all the effects of the developments at Church Hill House, Staff College site and Peacock Farm are better known.*

LEA response: None of these developments are in the designated area of The Pines. The LEA has anticipated the education requirements of each development and has used these in formulating the proposals that are the subject of this consultation. Each development has its own characteristics and needs to be looked at in both planning and education terms to ensure sustainability in the long term. It is also a statutory requirement for a developer to make contributions to the education infrastructure where additional places are needed because of a development.

c) Reduction in size of Birch Hill Primary to 449 place school (420 for admission purposes)

Comment: *The Governing Body of Birch Hill Primary school said that they would not disagree with this proposal but would oppose the relocation of the purpose built nursery into the main school building since the Governing Body do not believe that the existing provision could be replicated without significant and costly changes to the existing accommodation.*

LEA response

Changes to the accommodation at the School in 2003/4 to provide a more suitable environment for the national curriculum along side the removal of the temporary modular accommodation could achieve the propose reduction in surplus places without also requiring the relocation of the existing nursery class.

5.16 Option 2

a) The amalgamation of Fox Hill and Wildridings Primary schools on the Wildridings site.

See above

b) Reduction in size of Birch Hill Primary to 449 place school (420 for admission purposes)

See above.

c) Reduction in the size of Crown Wood Primary school to a 210 place school.

Comment: *Several different tenants using the Crown Wood site would need to be relocated*

LEA response: The calculation of the reduction of capacity at Crown Wood to 210 allows for existing tenants to remain in the building.

Comment: *Space may be needed at Crown Wood to accommodate overspill pupils from Harmans Water Primary.*

LEA response: The LEA recognises that there are 72 pupils from Crown Wood's designated area who currently attend Harmans Water Primary School. In future, with the development of the Staff College site, future pupils from the Crown Wood area may not be able to secure a place at Harmans Water. This was included in the consultation document.

Comment: *Existing accommodation at Crown Wood School is unsuitable and would need extensive remodelling at considerable cost.*

LEA response: The LEA agrees that the existing accommodation at Crown Wood would need to be remodelled. This was included in the consultation document.

5.17 Option 3

a) Closure of Wooden Hill Primary school

Comment:*This option reduces the number of surplus places to 14% which is more than the target.*

LEA response: This option is marginally less effective than others.

Comment: *Wooden Hill achieves amongst the highest academic standards in South Bracknell*

LEA response: All schools in South Bracknell are achieving well in terms of their pupil intake.

Comment: *Wooden Hill is oversubscribed on entry*

LEA response: This is true.

Comment: *Wooden Hill pupils would have to travel unacceptable distances to their designated area school or neighbouring schools.*

LEA response: The vast majority of pupils live a short distance from their designated area school. Should Wooden Hill School close, then the next nearest schools are Great Hollands and The Pines, which are both under one kilometre.

Comment: *It is counter productive to close Wooden Hill and build a school on Peacock Farm so close.*

LEA response: The School on Peacock Farm would be built to serve its own local community and would be 1.8 miles away from Wooden Hill with only pedestrian access. No road access will be planned.

Comment: *Traffic on the Great Hollands estate and the Crowthorne Road would probably increase significantly.*

LEA response: A large number of pupils currently attending Wooden Hill come from outside its designated area. These pupils would be able to attend their designated area school without necessarily using a car. Many pupils currently come to Wooden Hill by car and this traffic may decrease were the school to close.

Comment: *The Wooden Hill area would lose its community focus*

LEA response: The LEA recognises the important part that the local school plays in its community.

Comment: *School amalgamation keeps the pupils and staff together and maintains stability. Closure and dispersal causes disruption to pupils' education and emotional well being.*

LEA response: Amalgamation was not proposed for Wooden Hill due to the variety of designated areas that the existing pupils come from and consequently parents may wish to make different choices for their children. There was no obvious school with which Wooden Hill could amalgamate.

Comment: *Job losses would be inevitable*

LEA response: The LEA would try to retain as many staff as possible from the School as all are highly valued. There is considerable turnover of staff within Bracknell Forest so redeployment will be possible for many. Schools receiving the pupils from Wooden Hill will also require additional teachers.

b) Reduction in the size of Crown Wood Primary school to a 210 place school.

See above.

5.18 General comments

Comment: *No school should close through this review and a school should be maintained in each community by reducing the size of schools where possible.*

LEA response: The LEA recognises the important part that the local school plays in its community. The LEA's current admission policies support the view of local schools for each community.

Revenue Implications of the South Bracknell Review

Option 1

Amalgamate Fox Hill Primary & Wildridings Primary on the Wildridings site

Amalgamate The Pines Infant and Juniors to a 210 place school

Reduce Birch Hill to a 449 place school

Total Option 1**Saving to schools****Saving to the Council****Saving to Central Government****Total annual saving to BFBC****Option 2**

Amalgamate Fox Hill Primary & Wildridings Primary on the Wildridings site

Reduce Birch Hill to a 449 place school

Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school

Total Option 2**Saving to schools****Saving to the Council****Saving to Central Government****Total annual saving to BFBC****Option 3**

Close Wooden Hill *

Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school

Total Option 3**Saving to schools****Saving to the Council****Saving to Central Government****Total annual saving to BFBC**

Aggregate Reduction in School Spending £	Reduction in income		Net Saving to schools £
	Grant (Including LEA contribution) £	Budget Allocation £	
-135,380	-25,700	-51,150	-58,530
-115,580	-30,780	-53,320	-31,480
-17,840	0	-3,900	-13,940
-268,800	-56,480	-108,370	-103,950
			-103,950
		-117,610	
	-47,240		
		-222,000	
-135,380	-25,700	-51,150	-58,530
-17,840	0	-3,900	-13,940
-33,360	0	-2,220	-31,140
-186,580	-25,700	-57,270	-103,610
			-103,610
		-60,120	
	-22,850		
		-164,000	
-177,140	-30,000	-41,120	-106,020
-33,360	0	-2,220	-31,140
-210,500	-30,000	-43,340	-137,160
			-137,160
		-43,340	
	-30,000		
		-181,000	

Preferred Solution

Amalgamate The Pines Infant and Juniors to a 210 place school
 Reduce Fox Hill to a 210 place school
 Reduce Wildridings to a 315 place school
 Reduce Birch Hill to a 449 place school

Total Preferred Solution

Saving to schools

Saving to the Council

Saving to Central Government

Total annual saving to BFBC

Aggregate Reduction in School Spending £	Reduction in income		Net Saving to schools £
	Grant (Including LEA contribution) £	Budget Allocation £	
-115,580	-30,780	-53,320	-31,480
-5,850	0	-2,390	-3,460
-13,960	0	-3,880	-10,080
-17,840	0	-3,900	-13,940
-153,230	-30,780	-63,490	-58,960
			-58,960
		-69,880	
	-24,390		
			-129,000

* Budget saving reflects non-pupil led elements only. Pupil led funding expected to be transferred to other schools.

All figures at 2003/04 prices.

Budget adjustments calculated on the basis of 2003/04 pupil numbers.

Grant covers School Standards Grant and smaller amounts from the Standards Fund.

SOUTH BRACKNELL REVIEW

ACCOMMODATION ANALYSIS FOR APRIL 2006 AND APRIL 2008

Option	Capacity 2003	2003			2006			2008				Notes
		April NOR	IAL	Number of Classrooms	April NOR	Number of Classrooms Required	Change	April NOR	IAL	Number of Classrooms	Change	
<i>Amalgamate Fox Hill and Wildridings</i> Implications for Wildridings	411	380	60	15	540	18	3	465	60	14	-4	Figures exclude Nursery. Fox Hill Nursery would also have to relocate IAL of 60
<i>Amalgamate the Pines Infant and Juniors</i> Implications for the Pines Junior	240	199	60	8	302	11	3	210	30	8	-3	Figures exclude nursery. Office area may need modification. IAL of 30
<i>Reduce Birch Hill to 420 place school</i> Implications for Birch Hill	539	472	77	18	406	15	-3	415	60	15	0	School already identified for remodelling due to unsuitable classroom sizes. 1 classroom used for inclusion project. Figures exclude Nursery.
<i>Reduce Crown Wood to a 210 place school</i> Implications for Crown Wood	390	254	60	13	195	8	-5	187	30	8	0	Would require removal of all modular buildings & remodelling of existing accom. Would allow SWAAY school to remain. Excludes Nursery. IAL of 30.
<i>Close Wooden Hill Primary</i> Implications for Great Hollands Primary	428	379	60	15	504	18	3	514	75	18	0	Figures exclude Nursery
<i>Reduce Wildridings to a 315 place school</i> Implications for Wildridings	411	380	60	15	315	11	-3	315	45	11	0	Remove single modular building and find alternative use for 2 classrooms
<i>Reduce Fox Hill to a 210 place school</i> Implications for Fox Hill	297	201	42	10	200	7	-3	200	30	7	0	Nursery stays in KS1 building and meals are prepared in KS1 building and served in KS2 building.



