

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**DATE: 31 MAY 2017**

**LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE OCKLEY SITE OF SCOTT BROADWOOD C OF E INFANT SCHOOL**



#### **SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Governing Body of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School, in partnership with Guildford Diocesan Board of Education, has undertaken a formal consultation on a proposal to close the Ockley site of the school, with a view to consolidating its educational provision on its Capel site. The consultation was conducted between 13 March 2017 and 24 April 2017.

The Leader of the Council is asked to review the education rationale for the project and summary of the consultation process/feedback provided within this report and associated annexes and, on that basis, decide whether to approve the closure of the Ockley site, effective from 1 September 2017.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council determines the Statutory Notice to close the Ockley site of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School, so as to bring about the consolidation of this school on its Capel site, effective from 1 September 2017.

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

At its core, the proposal to close the Ockley site and consolidate all of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School's educational provision on the Capel site is rooted in the need to establish a financially sustainable operating model due to reducing pupil numbers. In addition, it is anticipated that the proposal would have tertiary benefits with respect to the coordination of staffing resource, outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching and learning.

In line with this, the School's Governing Body has undertaken the requisite statutory consultation to inform the decision making process, with two-thirds of respondents expressing support for the proposal to close the Ockley site and consolidate the school's provision in Capel. For these reasons, it is recommended that the Leader of the Council determines the Statutory Notice (appended to this report as Annex 1), so as to bring the closure of the Ockley site formally into effect from September 2017.

#### **DETAILS:**

##### **The Proposal**

1. Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School is a one-and-a-third form entry Voluntary Aided Infant School which accommodates children from Year R to Year 2. The school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 40 and admits up to this number every year into its Year R, giving an overall capacity of 120 places for mainstream pupils.
2. At present, Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School operates across two distinct sites. These sites are located 1.98 miles apart, at the following addresses:
  - Ockley Site – The Green, Ockley, Surrey RH5 5TR.
  - Capel Site – The Street, Capel, Dorking, Surrey RH5 5JX
3. Despite its split site nature, the school is (and operates as) a single institution with a single governing body and leadership team.
4. On 13 March 2017, the Governing Body of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School, in cooperation with the Diocese of Guildford, initiated a formal consultation on a proposal to consolidate the school on a single site, through the closure of the Ockley site and relocation of the classes currently based there to the Capel site, from September 2017. The School's current capacity and PAN would remain unchanged under this proposal.

### Reasons for the Proposal

5. The Governing Body's rationale for this proposal is to ensure financial sustainability which can only be achieved with a one site operating model due to reducing pupil numbers. The proposed consolidation would also have distinct educational benefits that would enhance the quality of teaching and learning that the school would be able to offer to its pupils.
6. **Impact of Reducing Pupil Numbers and Financial Consequences** – The school is currently facing significant budgetary pressures that have arisen as a consequence of lower intakes than PAN and are projected to be exacerbated by the new National Funding Formula. The first indication of these financial difficulties occurred in Autumn 2013 following a low Reception intake. Since that point, the Governing Body has undertaken several measures to address the mounting financial pressure, inclusive of seeking financial support packages from the community and reductions in staffing and other budgets. However, in the face of continued intakes below PAN, such small-scale measures are no longer sufficient to maintain the school as financially viable. Fundamentally, the school is in the unique position of being a one Form of Entry (1FE) Infant School across two sites and, without a full cohort, it is difficult for such a small school (with the limited resources that this attracts) to continue to operate in such a fashion, even with the benefit of the additional split site funding it receives (£105,249 in 2017/18). On this basis, the school has financially modelled three scenarios, reflecting the 'status quo'; an 'educationally viable two base model'; and an 'educationally viable one base model'. The latter two scenarios reflect an enhanced level of pedagogical support and are, therefore, necessarily more resource intensive than the 'status quo'. The detailed financial models are provided in Annex 2 and the headline figures are summarised below:

Model	Full Year Surplus / Deficit (£)
Status Quo	- 24,000

EV Two Base Model	- 99,000
EV One Base Model	+ 10,000

7. As shown above, a budget deficit is only realistically avoidable through the consolidation of the school on a single site owing to the many efficiencies associated with such a move (principally, in terms of staffing, but also in terms of resources, building maintenance etc.).
8. As a school's income is principally defined in line with the number of pupils on roll financial planning has to account for the projected level of pupil demand in future years. Scoot Broadwood C of E Infant School is located within the South Mole Valley planning area. Within this area, there is presently provision for 120 places per year in Year R, composed of the following:
- Charlwood Village Infant School (offering 15 Year R places per annum);
  - Newdigate C of E Endowed Aided Infant School (offering 35 Year R places per annum);
  - The Weald C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School (offering 30 Year R places per annum); and
  - Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School (offering 40 Year R places per annum).
9. Projections of future demand for school places in this area are presented in the below table:

Year	YR PAN	YR Projection	Surplus
2017/18	120	99	21
2018/19	120	91	29
2019/20	120	93	27
2020/21	120	91	29
2021/22	120	90	30
2022/23	120	91	29
2023/24	120	92	28
2024/25	120	92	28
2025/26	120	93	27

10. As can be seen from the above, there is a sustained and significant surplus capacity projected for the area, with approximately one in every four available places projected to be unfilled. This level of surplus capacity will necessarily have an impact on the budgets of local schools into the future, making the need to rationalise existing provision even more pressing.
11. **Educational Case for Consolidation** – The proposed move to a single site would also bring associated educational benefits in addition to the immediate resource implications. Firstly, consolidation would provide the school with greater flexibility to manage staff and the capacity for greater focus on pupils. In not having to manage work across two sites, the Headteacher will be able to spend more time focussed on teaching and learning and improving overall outcomes in this respect. In addition, subject leaders will be able to more effectively monitor their specific discipline across classes whilst the capacity for staff to share expertise, ideas and planning will be enhanced. Secondly, by removing the need to duplicate resources, the School would be free to make a wider range of high-quality curriculum resources and materials

available to teachers and pupils. Thirdly, it is anticipated that outcomes would be improved by enabling all staff to become familiar with all pupils thereby improving the capacity for targeted interventions to improve learning, including with respect to pupils with Special Educational Needs. Consolidation on a single site would also provide pupils with a greater sense of “belonging” to a larger cohort with a single, defined identity improving the opportunity for social learning.

12. **Selection of the Capel Site** – The selection of the site on which to consolidate provision was the subject of careful consideration and options appraisal. The Capel site was chosen as the preferred location for a number of reasons, principal amongst which was the fact that it better suits the needs of the current and anticipated intake of the school, in terms of its location. In addition to this, the Capel buildings offer a number of benefits relative to the Ockley site including the capacity of the site and its adaptability for a larger cohort; the availability of outside space; kitchen provision; toilet provision and the modernity of the facilities. The school has employed building consultants to review the adaptations that would be required at both sites in order to accommodate the School’s full cohort current (and potential) and it has been determined that adaptations to the Capel building would be less significant and, as a consequence, incur less capital cost. The available playing fields at the Capel are sufficient in extent to meet the Building Bulletin 103 site area guidelines for maintained schools, assessed relative to the current size of the school. The Capel School Site is marked on the plan attached as Annex 5.

### **School Building Requirements**

13. A full Development and Improvement Plan has been formulated for the Capel site, which indicated a proposal for how the site could be enhanced, in order to enable the school to provide a high-quality learning environment, capable of accommodating the School’s full potential cohort. The implementation of any associated capital works would be entirely financed by the School and/or the Diocese. As such, the proposed consolidation of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School on the Capel site would not require any capital assistance from the Council.
14. It should be noted that Surrey County Council (SCC) owns a portion of the Ockley site, as evidenced in Land Registry documentation. The area in question is the identified playing field land outlined in blue on the plan attached as Annex 4. The remainder of the site is held by the Diocese, by way of a conveyance and legal advice received by the Diocese indicates that this is “not subject to reverter”. Consequently, any decisions with respect to the site’s future use would necessarily involve both the Diocese of Guildford and SCC.

<b><u>CONSULTATION:</u></b>
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15. The Governing Body of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford, conducted an informal consultation on the proposal to close the Ockley site between 18 January 2017 and 12 March 2017. The purpose of this consultation was to seek the community’s views on the proposal while also seeking input with respect to alternative solutions to the financial pressures that the school faced. As no financially viable alternative solutions were forthcoming during this initial period of consultation, in line with the appropriate statutory process, the Governing Body undertook

a formal consultation on the proposed closure of the Ockley site between 13 March 2017 and 24 April 2017. During the formal 'representation' period, a consultation document was produced and made available on the school's website. All key stakeholders were made aware of this process, inclusive of parents/carers of children attending Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School; employees and Governors of the schools; the Diocese of Guildford; relevant unions; local residents; other local schools; local borough and county councillors; and the School Admissions Forum. In addition, a public meeting was held on 22 March 2017, to which all interested parties were invited.

16. The feedback to the consultation was largely in support of the proposed closure of the Ockley site; in total two-thirds (66.7%) of respondents expressed agreement with the proposal. Naturally, this support was expressed in the context of regret that this measure had to be undertaken, but the general consensus was that the proposal was in the best interests of the school and represented the only sustainable means of securing the long-term viability of the school. Despite this, a number of concerns were raised, in particular, amongst those who opposed the proposed closure of the School. Three predominant areas of concern emerged through the consultation and have been/are being addressed as follows:
- **Communication** – a number of respondents felt that the proposal to close the Ockley site had been planned far in advance of the initiation of the consultation process and concern was expressed about the perceived “late notice” provided to the community about the proposal. Whilst it is true that the financial viability of the school has been an ongoing concern for some time, the necessity of closing one of the sites to maintain sustainability only came into evidence relatively recently (in November 2016), when other potential avenues (e.g. seeking supplementary funding) had been exhausted. This has been confirmed by SCC officers who have been working with the school on financial planning. It is felt that the commencement of informal consultation on the matter at hand in January 2017 represents an appropriately timed reaction.
  - **Impact on Ockley Village** – a number of respondents were concerned about the detrimental impact that the closure of the Ockley school base would have on the ongoing vibrancy of the village, particularly with respect to its appeal to younger families and also in light of the recent closure of other public amenities. Whilst the School's Governing Body is sympathetic to this concern, the financial modelling undertaken to inform the proposal clearly shows that failure to close one of the school sites would place the school into an ongoing deficit position and threaten the viability of the school as a whole, thereby making the area as a whole less appealing to young families than it would be by just closing the Ockley Village site. With a school base retained in Capel, young families will still have a school site within reasonable distance to home. Allied with this concern, a number of respondents question whether there were any formal plans for the Ockley site, if it were to be no longer utilised as a School. Whilst the Diocese is awaiting the outcome of the decision on the closure of the Ockley base in advance of formulating formal plans in this respect, it would certainly be open to engaging with members of the local community in respect of any suggestions that they may have for its future use. Since SCC also owns a portion of the site, it would necessarily be party to any discussions regarding the site's future use.
  - **Implications for Consolidated Site** – a number of respondents also expressed concerns with respect to the viability of the new school even if the Ockley site were to be closed. Whilst no guarantees can be made with

respect to *any* school's ongoing viability, the detailed financial modelling that has been undertaken does show that the school can remain operational, with an enhanced educational offer, on the basis of the broadly consistent pupil forecasts for the South Mole Valley area. A number of respondents were also concerned about the implications of additional traffic to the Capel site as a result of the implementation of this proposal. Whilst consolidation on a single site would inevitably mean increased traffic at school drop off / pick up times, as a 1FE Infant School, the overall traffic would still be significantly less than the majority of schools in the County. This fact notwithstanding, the school is in the process of formulating an updated Travel Plan to take account of the increased traffic movement and consider how this may be mitigated.

17. A full summary of the feedback from the formal stage of the consultation process is appended to this report as Annex 3. It should also be noted that the Council received a petition opposing the closure of the Ockley base in March 2017 (item 2c). This petition had received 123 signatures. However, as the petition was formulated in advance of the commencement of the formal consultation process, the Governing Body had not yet had a chance to fully address the concerns that underpinned the petition through the consultation process and at the consultation evening in particular. The fact that the responses to the formal consultation were largely in support of the proposed closure and did not indicate as significant a level of opposition as would seem to be indicated by the number of signatories to the petition would seem to indicate a "change in mood" among the local community

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

18. If the consolidation on the Capel site were to be approved, there is the possibility that this would require building works to enhance the capacity of the site. There would naturally be risks associated with any such building project and the school would employ suitably qualified consultants to maintain a Risk Register in this respect. As this project would not be financed by SCC, these risks would be entirely for the school's Governing Body and/or the Diocese of Guildford to manage.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

19. The financial implications of reducing pupil numbers and the options considered are outlined in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report.
20. If the closure of the Ockley site were to be approved this would necessitate the removal of split site funding for the school. This fact has been taken account of in the school's financial modelling which is appended as Annex 2. Schools Forum has agreed to a transition arrangement, whereby the School would receive half of this allocation for the 2017/18 academic year with full removal of this grant from September 2018 onwards. This offer may require Department for Education approval.
21. The County Council is required to provide home-to-school transport where a child attends their nearest school and the safe walking distance exceeds two miles (for pupils up to the age of eight). At present, the assessment of "nearest school" is taken as the nearest of either of the Ockley or Capel sites and the assessment of distance to school is taken as the distance from the pupils home to the site which they attend. If the proposal to close the Ockley

site were to be approved by the Council, both assessments would be made on the basis of the Capel site in relation to future eligibility decisions for new pupils; the nearest school assessment would continue to be based on both sites for students who joined the school prior to the decision. In terms of the assessment of “nearest school”, this would be unlikely to have any impact on parents living in Ockley, for whom Scott Broadwood would likely remain the closest in this respect. However, whilst the Council cannot pre-empt the outcome of individual assessments there is the potential that Ockley parents would become eligible for home-to-school transport to Scott Broadwood (as the nearest school), if the Ockley site were to be closed. Whilst the Council cannot forecast precisely how many parents may take up such an offer, it is not expected that any uptake would exceed that which could be accommodated within a standard minibus. A high-level estimate of this cost has been provided by the Admissions and Transport Team, which equates to £26,600 per annum. However, it should be noted that, whilst four pupils have been relocated to the Capel site from Ockley, no applications for home-to-school transport have yet been received. As such, it is plausible that uptake would not materialise (or otherwise remain low) in future. Consequently, the aforementioned cost should be treated as a higher-end estimate of what might be expected.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

22. The main driver for this site closure is the reducing pupil numbers across the two school sites. As a result the operating model based on two school sites is not financially viable or sustainable. By consolidating the school on a single site, efficiencies can be achieved and the operating model is more sustainable, assuming pupil numbers do not continue to reduce.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

##### **Pre-consultation**

23. There is a clear expectation in public law that public bodies should carry out a consultation process whenever considering making significant changes to service provision, particularly including the closure of any resources. There is a statutory requirement for consultation in this context as set out in the School Organisation Maintained Schools Guidance for Proposers and Decision Makers dated April 2016.
24. As it is proposed to close one of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School’s sites, the statutory procedure described in The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 has been followed.

##### **Post-consultation**

25. In considering this report, the Leader must give due regard to the results of the consultation, as set out above and in Annex 3, and the response of the Governing Body to the consultation comments and conscientiously take these matters into account when making its final decision.

##### **Best Value Duty**

26. The best value duty is contained in s3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the Council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that Councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

27. The closure of the Ockley site will not create any issues that would require the production of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), as no group with protected characteristics will be disproportionately adversely affected as a consequence of its approval, or otherwise.
28. The Capel school building complies with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) regulations.
29. Under the proposed consolidation on the Capel site, admission to Year R would continue to be based on the current admission arrangements for Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School. The admissions arrangements give the highest priority to Looked After Children and those with exceptional medical or social needs, thus supporting provision for the county's most vulnerable children. Priority is then given (in order) to those who are siblings of current pupils and those living in the ecclesiastical parishes of Capel, Ockley, Oakwood Hill, Forest Green and Coldharbour (with priority given to Churchgoers). Remaining applicants are then sorted on the basis of distance from home to school. These admissions criteria are fully compliant with the Schools Admissions Code.

#### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

30. This proposal does not have an impact on the overall supply of places in the South Mole Valley area. The improved educational offer that the school has planned in the one-site scenario would have the capacity to improve outcomes for any Looked After Children that attended the school.

#### **Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

31. The likely increase in traffic movements as a consequence of this proposal has the potential to increase carbon emissions. In order to mitigate this, the School's Governing Body are formulating a revised and updated School Travel Plan, which will seek to encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

32. Subject to approval of this report's recommendations by the Leader of the Council, the Governing Body of Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School would be required to implement the closure of the Ockley site and consolidation on the Capel site. This would be intended for full implementation from September 2017.

**Contact Officer:**

Oliver Gill, School Commissioning Officer, Tel: 020 8541 7383

**Consulted:**

Scott Broadwood C Of E Infant School Governing Body  
Diocese of Guildford  
Parents of pupils attending the school  
Local residents  
Local schools  
Liz Mills, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning  
Helyn Clack, Local County Council Member for Dorking Rural  
Mole Valley Council  
Unions  
School Admissions Forum

**Annexes:**

Annex 1 – Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School Statutory Notice (Full)  
Annex 2 – Financial Models  
Annex 3 – Summary of Consultation Feedback  
Annex 4 – Ockley Site Plan  
Annex 5 – Capel Site Plan

**Sources/background papers:**

- Scott Broadwood C of E Infant School Consultation Document
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