

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

DATE: 13 MARCH 2013

LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN,  
SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

SUBJECT: A PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE PORTESBERY SPECIAL  
SCHOOL FROM ITS CURRENT LOCATION TO A NEW SITE  
AND TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE SCHOOL FROM  
70 TO 105 PLACES



**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council has recently consulted on a proposal to expand and relocate Portesbery Special School from its current location to the old Blackdown Primary School site, GU16 6TA. The new school would be open by September 2015 with 105 places.

The Cabinet Member approved the publication of a statutory notice for this proposal on 15 January 2013 (see Annex 1 for a copy) with all representation due by 7 March 2013.

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider any formal representations to the public notice before taking the final decision on whether to implement the proposal.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Subject to any further representations received by the date of the meeting, it is recommended that:

1. The proposal is implemented and Portesbery Special School is relocated to the old Blackdown Primary School site and expanded from 70 to 105 places.
2. That officers prepare a full planning application to be considered by the Planning Authority and that the proposal be implemented subject to the agreed budget set by Cabinet.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The current site and buildings are deficient and a solution has been required for some time. The consultation showed that there is strong support from the school, Governors and the local community on this proposal. Now that a suitable site has been identified that is acceptable to both the school and parents, the Local Authority should seek to proceed with the proposal to and to seek planning approval on the scheme.



## **DETAILS:**

### **Business Case**

1. Portesbery School is a special school serving up to 70 pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Pupils may have additional sensory impairments, physical difficulties or challenging behaviors. The school is an all age school (2-19 years) and is currently located on Portesbery Road, Camberley, GU15 3SZ.
2. Portesbery is an 'outstanding school' as judged by Ofsted, but the school achieves outstanding outcomes in spite of the buildings and site that it currently operates from. The Local Authority's SEN strategy is to develop its special school provision to avoid costly placements in the non-maintained and independent sector. If special schools in Surrey are to be in a position to cater for the needs of the most complex children in Surrey then they need a modern and fit for purpose learning environment that is also outstanding. The current school is deficient for the following reasons:
3. Site - the current school site is significantly smaller than what has been recommended by the Department for Education (DfE) as a typical site for a school of this nature and size. The school has no playing fields and many of the informal play spaces are unusable because of the slope that exists on the site (the school is located on the top of a steep rise). The school has some hard play facilities but this currently doubles as a drop off and pick up point for the several buses, minibuses and taxis that are used to transport children to and from the school. As a result, the play area cannot be developed in any meaningful way and is often 'polluted' by dirt and oil brought in by bus traffic.
4. Building issues – The accommodation at the current school is well below the standard for special schools outlined by the DfE (Building Bulletin 101). The school's planned number is 70 but against the same standard the capacity of the school is less than this figure. The shortfall in capacity at the school is largely a result of the small classrooms and hall, the lack of specialist curriculum spaces and break out areas. Additionally, the buildings which date back to the 1960s, although reasonably well maintained, are poorly insulated and costly to run. Both the site and building shortfalls have been referenced in previous Ofsted reports as a concern, despite the school achieving good and outstanding ratings in the last reports.
5. On top of building issues, there are other reasons to consider this proposal favorably. Portesbery School serves children who have a range of difficulties including children with severe learning difficulties (SLD), low functioning autism as well as children with more profound or multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Over the last 10 years, the number of children with SLD has remained roughly the same in Surrey but there have been increases in the number of children with PMLD, and to a greater extent autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The Local Authority is not proposing for Portesbery to change in the type of needs that the school will meet but wants more places to be available and to provide facilities that allows the school to manage greater numbers of children with SLD but for whom there will be other conditions that make their needs complex (medical, behavioral and language needs). In creating a new school, there is an opportunity to secure sufficient and high quality provision in Surrey for many years to come. This will contribute to

Surrey's overarching SEN strategy and ensure that there are sufficient places in outstanding special schools in Surrey with modern fit for purpose facilities reducing our reliance on non-maintained or independent placements in the future.

6. It is also noteworthy that funding for special schools is changing from next year and the new proposed formula for special schools suggests that larger schools will be more financially sustainable in the future than smaller schools. For this reason and the reasons given above the Local Authority is proposing to rebuild the school to cater for 105 places in the future.
7. The proposal is for the new school to be located at the former Blackdown Primary School site. The school on this site was closed in 2005 and the site has remained vacant since then. The old school buildings are derelict and will be demolished to make way for the new purpose built SEN school. The map in Annex 2 indicates the location of the new site in relation to the existing site. The new site is approximately 4.5km from the existing site (straight line distance) and is located within The Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut. This area has been identified as a site for a large housing development (1200 dwellings) which is expected to take place in 2016. Significant additional infrastructure is being planned as part of this development including retail, health and recreational facilities as well as a new primary school.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

8. Portesbery School and Surrey County Council consulted on this proposal between 23 November 2012 and 21 December 2012. A meeting for staff and a public meeting for parents, Governors and other interested parties was held on 6 December 2012 at the school to discuss the proposal in detail. A consultation document was sent to all parents at the school and a copy was loaded onto the schools website and the Surrey County Council website: Home > Learning > Schools > Education consultations and plans.
9. A summary of the responses to the consultation was provided in the report to the Cabinet Member on 15 January which is available on SCC's website. Following consultation the Cabinet Member determined to issue public notices indicating the Local Authority's intention to implement the proposals. This was published in the local press, in local community facilities and outside the school on 25 January 2012 with a deadline for representations of 7 March 2013.
10. There has been one representation regarding this proposal to date, which was not directly about the school, but rather about the future of Hillside Resource Centre which is adjacent to the school. This has been forwarded to Adult Services for a response. Given that the deadline for representations is after the date of publication of this report any further representations will be tabled at the meeting on the 13 March 2013.

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

11. There are risks associated with this project and a project risk register has been compiled and is regularly updated. An appropriate level of contingency is included within the project budget.

12. The main risk is that the site sits adjacent to the Metropolitan Green Belt. Early pre-planning consultation has taken place to establish the measures required to mitigate these risks.
13. From a revenue point of view cost savings from this project are dependent both on future needs and on future DfE SEN funding mechanisms, which are currently subject to some uncertainty.
14. Any decision by the Cabinet Member will be conditional on planning permission being granted.

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

15. The project is included in the County Council's Special Educational Needs (SEN) capital strategy as forms part of the current Medium Term Financial Plan. A feasibility study has been developed providing a robust cost estimate for the project and the Cabinet have signed off the funds necessary to tender for the project in their meeting on 5 February 2013.

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

16. The Section 151 Officer confirms that funding for this capital scheme is included in the 2013/18 Medium Term Financial Plan and fits with the Special Education Needs Strategy. Detailed costings will be further developed as the schemes progresses to tender and the section 151 officer expects the costs to be contained within the agreed funding level'.

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

17. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 contains the regulations that apply to prescribed alterations. The DfE has published two pieces of Guidance relating to prescribed alterations: Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School or Adding a Sixth Form and Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (Other than Expansion). These contain both statutory guidance (i.e. guidance to which proposers and decision makers have a statutory duty to have regard) and non-statutory guidance on the process for making changes to school provision as described in this report.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

18. An equalities impact assessment has not been carried out regarding this proposal. Given that the school is not changing the type of provision it is offering, the nature of its admissions and that that all children will still have the same access to the school (all children are bussed into school) there are no significant equalities issues to consider as part of this proposal.

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

19. This proposal would provide increase provision in the area, which would be of benefit to all in the community served by the school. This means it would therefore also be of benefit to any looked after children who may attend the school.

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

20. The design philosophy will be to create a building that will support low energy consumption, reduce solar gain and promote natural ventilation. The aim is for the buildings to exceed the requirements of Building Regulations in terms of thermal insulation and energy consumption and this will be achieved by a high performance thermal envelope which will reduce the overall heating demand with minimal heating provided to compensate for fabric losses only.

## **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

- 21.
- (Approx July 2013) – planning application considered and decided by Local Planning Authority.
  - Contractor appointed to build the new school
  - Contractor starts on site, main construction phase
  - June 2015 – Handover of buildings to school
  - September 2015 – School starts new academic year in new school premises

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### **Contact Officer:**

Kieran Holliday, School Commissioning Officer, tel 020 8541 7383

### **Consulted:**

Matthew Sartin / Susan Carpenter – Head Teacher / Chair of Governors, Portesbery School

Portesbery Governing Body

David Hodge, Leader

Peter Martin, Deputy Leader

Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency

Nick Wilson, Strategic Director, Children, Schools & Families

Peter-John Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning

John Stebbings, Chief Property Officer – Property Services.

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning.

Tony Samuels, Cabinet Member for Assets and Regeneration Programmes

Chris Pitt, Local Member for Surrey Heath, Frimley Green and Mytchett

Bill Chapman, Local Member for Surrey Heath, Camberley East.

Paula Chowdhury, Senior Finance Manager – Children, Schools and Families.

Susan Smyth, Senior Finance Manager – Change and Efficiency.

### **Annexes:**

Annex 1 – Copy of Statutory Notice

Annex 2 - Site location Map

### **Sources/background papers:**

- Consultation Paper – ‘A proposal to relocate portesbery special school from its current location to a new site and to increase the capacity of the school from 70 to 105 places. (available on Surrey CC website – [Home > Learning > Schools > Education Consultation and Plans](#)).

- Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning Report '*A proposal to relocate Portesbery Special School from its current location to a new site and to increase the capacity of the school from 70 to 105 places*', 15 January, 2013.
  - Cabinet – Schools Expansion Programme from Sept 2013 – Portesbury School, Camberley, relocation and expansion – 5 Feb 2013
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### **A PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE PORTESBERY SCHOOL, CAMBERLEY**

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Surrey County Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to Portesbery School (Community Special), Portesbery Road, Camberley, GU15 3SZ from 01 September 2015.

Surrey County Council in partnership with the Governing Body of Portesbery Special School, is proposing to relocate the school from its current address to a new site located at the old Blackdown Primary School site, GU16 6TA. The proposal is also to increase the number of places at the school from 70 to 105. The implementation date for this proposal is September 2015.

Portesbery School is a special school serving up to 70 pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Pupils may have additional sensory impairments, physical difficulties or challenging behaviours. The school is an all age school (2-19 years) and is currently located on Portesbery Road, Camberley, GU15 3SZ.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained by writing to: Kieran Holliday, School Commissioning Officer, Surrey County Council, Room 326, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 2DJ or by emailing [schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk).

Within six weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the named officer above.

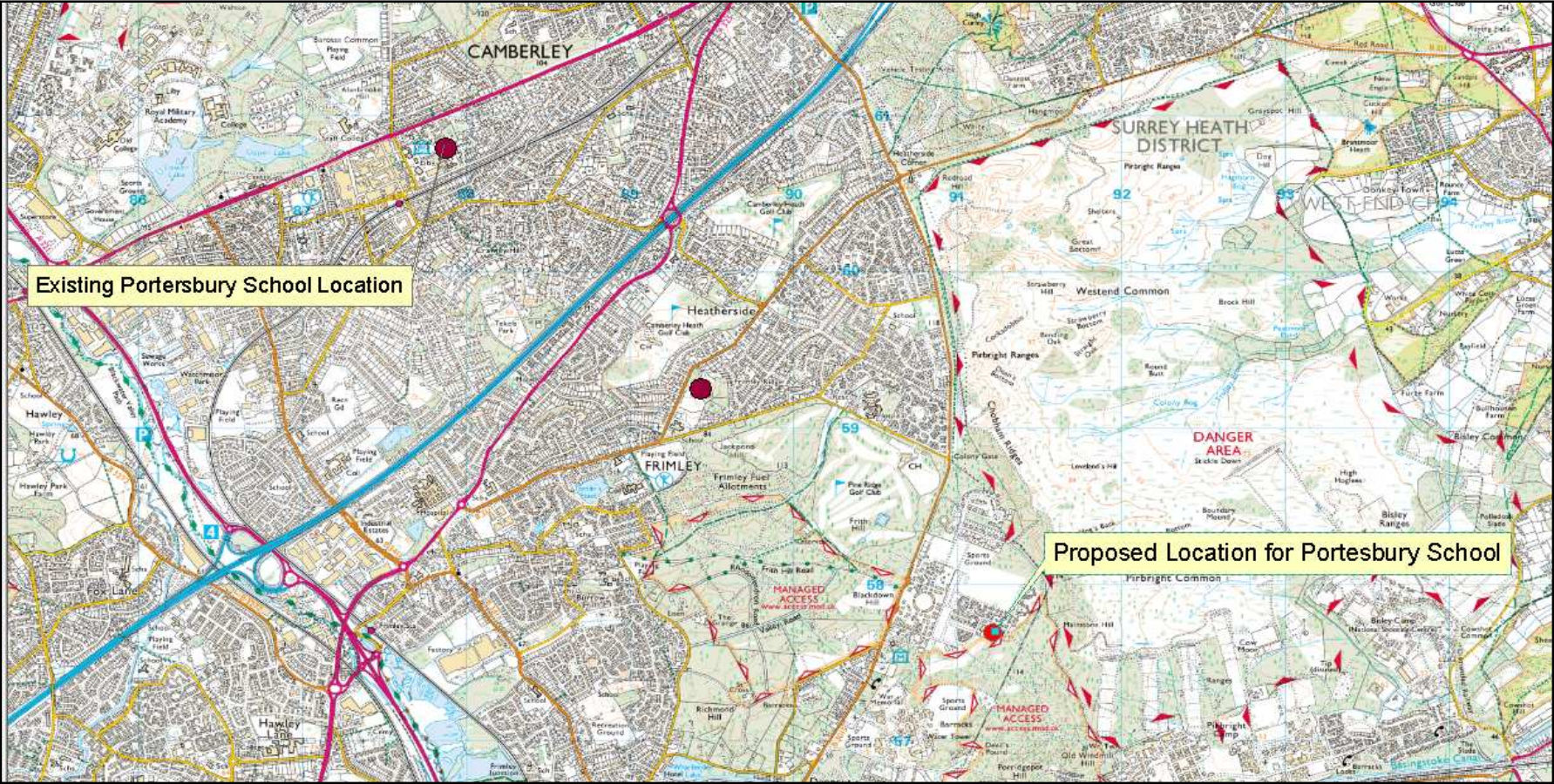
Signed: Kieran Holliday,

Publication Date: 25 January 2013





Annex 2 – Map of Site Location



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