

**CABINET MEMBER DECISION – EDUCATION & LEARNING
19 MAY 2022**

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question (1) – from Kate Young:

Why are Surrey Council's education experts completely absent from the engagement with residents over the proposed move of Priory School and is it because this proposal is motivated purely by the objectives of Surrey Council's property management teams rather than those that should be looking after the welfare and education of local children?

Reply:

The welfare and education of local children is at the root of everything we do and the Education Team within the County Council have been working on this project for a number of years. The motivation for moving the school is to improve the facilities for children attending the school so they are secure and have an ideal environment for learning, where they can thrive and succeed. The lead department within the County Council has been Land and Property as managing planning and construction is within their remit. Colleagues from Education and Lifelong Learning are central to the planning consultation currently underway.

Question (2) - from Jason Young:

Given the easily perceivable significant impact on the local families, associated schools and the local communities, why did Surrey County Council decide to move Reigate Priory Junior School to Woodhatch Place in the summer of 2020 before any consultation with parents or residents had taken place?

Reply:

Following a robust appraisal, the Council determined that the Woodhatch Place site was the best location for the relocation of Reigate Priory School. This site also has the support of the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE Statutory guidance - Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, October 2018 - sets out that consultation on transferring to a new site is only required where the main entrance of the proposed new site for a school would be more than two miles from the main entrance of the current school site. If this had been the case for the relocation to Woodhatch there would have been a separate two stage consultation process. This would have been in addition to the two stage consultation on the planning proposal that is currently taking place. However, because of the locations of both schools, the additional consultation is not required in these circumstances. As such, the County Council is following the statutory guidance.

The selection of alternative sites would not normally involve parents or public. The robust appraisal to establish a suitable site will be available when the planning application is submitted.

Question (3) — from Nathan Lutz:

At the consultation events for the proposed Reigate Priory Junior School move a Surrey County Council (SCC) representative explained that only sites large enough for a 600-place school were considered for a new location. Please can you explain why SCC are proposing to move the school so far away from a) the main feeder school, Holmesdale Community Infant School, and b) 80% of the Priory pupils without considering the option of setting up two smaller through schools in both North and South Reigate?"

Reply:

We carried out a robust appraisal to compare different options to meet the educational need for a new school building. In doing so, we have balanced educational, technical, environmental, programme and cost considerations.

Woodhatch Place was the only site that met all the criteria required to deliver a 600-place junior school building as well as outdoor school spaces. It is the only site that is available within a reasonable time frame, is at least five acres in size and has the fewest planning constraints.

A detailed site search document will be part of the planning submission and will include the analysis of all the identified sites. This document will be available to view once a planning application has been submitted and validated.

The DfE Priority Schools Building Programme 2 (PSBP2) funding is based on the like-for-like replacement of the current Reigate Priory provision and there is no option of setting up two smaller primary schools in North and South Reigate through this programme.

Question (4) - from Matthew Day:

Does Surrey Council have any policies regarding safe routes to school, active travel, and encouraging families to move away from cars when dropping off and picking up schoolchildren? - and what are those policies? As a consequence of the proposed move of Reigate School to Woodhatch Place, the safe active travel that currently occurs at Holmesdale and Priory will be almost impossible to achieve, even for the keenest walker / cyclist / scooting family such as ourselves. We have a wonderful opportunity with the setting up of the new Government Executive Active Travel England to be bold and ambitious with any plans to upgrade the existing school

Reply:

The Council follows the national guidance (Assessment of Walked Routes to School – Road Safety GB and ROSPA revised in 2021).

In summary, if there is a continuous footway and adequate crossing points then it is deemed a safe walking route on the assumption that the child is accompanied by an adult.

The Council is working with the project team to ensure the school is as well connected and accessible as possible by non-car modes, by making the appropriate provisions at the

school site as part of the design, alongside promotion of park and stride, cycle/scooter parking and car sharing. This is in keeping with the Surrey Local Transport Plan 4.

As this is a school relocation approximately 0.7 miles directly south of the existing site, the school currently already generates pedestrian demand from all directions, including the reverse journey alongside Cockshot Hill, particularly where parents have children in both Dovers Green and Reigate Priory Junior School. We acknowledge that the relocation will result in intensification of demand alongside Cockshot Hill which is why we have positively engaged with the community and are looking to deliver mitigation in direct response to the areas of concern raised. This will be alongside a School Travel Plan, Car Park Management Plan, and Delivery and Servicing Plan which will be submitted with the planning application.

SCC Transport Development Planning will respond to all matters in respect of active travel, road safety and accessibility during the determination period. Assuming the application is successfully granted, the SCC Travel Planning team will be continuously engaged with the project and the school in the lead up to and following occupation of the new school site.

Question (5) – from Alice Murray

What does Surrey Council think is a reasonable distance for primary school children to walk to school?

Reply:

The Council follows the government legislation on walking distance. This is defined in the Education Act 1996 Section 444 para (5) In subsection (4) “walking distance”—

- (a) in relation to a child who is under the age of eight, means two miles, and
- (b) in relation to a child who has attained the age of eight, means three miles.

In each case measured by the nearest available route.

Above these distances, assistance for transport to school applies.

In addition, statutory entitlement is extended for children from low-income groups. Children above the age of 8, but under the age of 11, from low-income families will be entitled to travel assistance to their nearest suitable school if the shortest walking distance between their home and the school is more than two miles.

Question (6) - from Jane Dee

I live in north Reigate, and both myself and my husband work full time & need to be able to commute into London. The new proposal for the school has a “sustainability initiative” being one of no provision for dropping off by car - and forcing parents in north Reigate, and children, to walk 1.8 miles each way along a dangerous road. However - I have a fully electric car. Which more than meets the criteria for sustainability for the school. Will I be able to drive my child to school in this case?

Reply:

The planning application will robustly address issues in relation to transport and road safety, these proposals will be informed by technical experts in this field and the public consultation currently underway.

Parking, drop-off and pick-up are subjects that will be determined through the planning application. We are in close dialogue with the Highways Department at Surrey County Council as the Highway Authority and are carrying out a number of parking and traffic surveys of the local highway to inform the forthcoming Transport Assessment. Parents will be able to choose how to take their children to school including whether to use a family car.

Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Education & Learning