

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

30 April 2019

Subject: Proposed Closure of The Potterne Site of Five Lanes Primary School

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

Five Lanes VC Primary School was created in 2006 following the amalgamation of Potterne and Worton Primary Schools. Since 2006 the school has run Key Stage 1 classes on the Potterne site and KS2 on the Worton site. The distance between the two sites is 2.2 miles.

Following informal consultation, the Governors of Five Lanes Primary School published a statutory Notice on 24 January 2019 proposing to discontinue (close) the school site in Potterne from 31st August 2019. It proposed that from 1st September 2019, all pupils on roll at the school would be taught at just the Worton site. The final date for comments on, or objections to, the proposal was 28 February 2019. Four comments were received.

In 2014 the school dropped from five classes to four due to declining pupil numbers. Since then pupil numbers have declined further and the school reduced to three classes from September 2018. This has left only one class on the Potterne site and two at Worton. With falling pupil numbers, the Governing Body is now proposing the permanent closure of the school site at Potterne.

As a VC school, the Governing Body have followed the process set out in the Education and Inspections Act to propose closure of the Potterne site. However the final decision on whether to approve this proposal must be made by the Council.

Proposal

1. Cabinet approves the proposal to discontinue (close) the Potterne site of Five Lanes Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019. From 1st September 2019 all pupils would therefore be educated on the Worton site.

Reason for Proposal

There is insufficient demand for places at Five Lanes Primary School to sustain two school sites. Surplus places on the Potterne site will be over 50% from September 2019 and the school faces a rising deficit budget if it continues to try and maintain two sites, making the school financially unsustainable.

Terence Herbert**Executive Director Children's Services**

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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet Members with all the relevant information to make an informed decision on the closure proposal in relation to the Potterne site of Five Lanes Primary School.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Council's vision is to make Wiltshire a great place to live and work. This initiative specifically delivers increased wellbeing and/or safeguarding, by ensuring that resources are utilised effectively and efficiently, in coordination with partners and providers.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Wiltshire Council recognises the government's presumption against the closure of village schools and will only bring forward proposals to close a village school where it can be demonstrated that one or more of the criteria below can be met. Relevant criteria are italicised:
 - 1) *There is only very limited demand for places at the school from children living within the designated area.*
 - 2) *Surplus places at the school exceed 25%.*
 - 3) Standards are low and there is little confidence in the likelihood of improvement.
 - 4) Recruitment of a head teacher has not proved possible.
 - 5) *The necessary improvements to the school accommodation are either not possible or not cost effective.*
 - 6) *The school has a deficit budget without realistic prospects of recovery.*
4. In the present circumstances, the Potterne site of Five Lanes Primary School meets the first, second, fifth and sixth criteria for closure in the list above. There is no proposal to close the whole school, just reduce from two sites to one.

Background

5. The process for decision making regarding closing a school site (rather than a whole school) is set out in the Department for Education's statutory process as prescribed in the following legislation: The 'Education & Inspections Act 2006', as amended by the 'Education Act 2011', The 'School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013' and in guidance published in October 2018 'Making Significant Changes ('prescribed alterations') to Maintained Schools'. The process consists of the following key stages for a Voluntary Controlled School:
 - I. Governing Body undertake Informal consultation for a recommended period of 6 weeks.
 - II. Governing Body considers the responses to the consultation and determines whether to proceed with publishing statutory notices together with a further period of statutory consultation.
 - III. Statutory notices published regarding the nature of the proposal and commencement of a statutory consultation period of 4 weeks.
 - IV. Cabinet considers the consultation responses and determines whether or not the school site should be closed.
6. The informal consultation (I.) was conducted between 8 October 2018 and 19 November 2018 (6 weeks) and included a public consultation meeting on the 15 October 2018. On 4 December 2018, the Governing Body of Five Lanes Primary School considered the responses to the consultation and decided to take the next step in the process to issue a Statutory Notice (II.). This notice was published on 24 January 2019 proposing to make a prescribed alteration to Five Lanes VC Primary School, Blackberry Lane, Potterne, SN10 5NZ, namely the discontinuance of use of the Potterne site, from 31st August 2019 (III.). The final date for comments on, or objections to, the proposal was 28 February 2019 and five responses were received. The next stage (IV.) is for Cabinet to consider all the consultation responses and determine whether the Potterne school site should be closed as proposed.
7. Five Lanes VC Primary School was created in 2006 following the amalgamation of Potterne and Worton Primary Schools. Since 2006 the school has run Key Stage 1 classes on the Potterne site and KS2 on the Worton site. There is approximately 2.2 miles between the school sites. In 2014 and 2018, the school was assessed as GOOD by OFSTED. During the latest inspection, the HMI Inspector was informed of the proposed closure and verbally supported the principle of moving to one site.
8. In 2014 the school dropped from five classes to four due to declining pupil numbers. Since then pupil numbers have declined further and the school reduced to three classes from September 2018. This has left only one class remaining on the Potterne site and two at Worton.

9. A table showing pupil numbers in recent years is below.

Academic Year (Jan)	Pupil Numbers
2012	112
2013	109
2014	105
2015	104
2016	109
2017	95
2018	86
2019	71

10. At present the split site school can accommodate 146 pupils. This would reduce to 90 pupils if solely based at Worton. The Published Admissions Number would also drop from 20 to 12. For the last few years the school has on average admitted only 66% of the pupils who live in the catchment area. The remainder mainly attend either Holy Trinity Primary School in Great Cheverell or Dauntsey Primary School in West Lavington. The birth rate in the catchment area has also been dropping for the last few years. The local authority pupil forecast for the school suggests that a capacity of 90 would be more than sufficient to meet the local demand for school places.

11. As at January 2018, the 86 pupils attending the school were resident in the following areas:

Area	Number of Pupils
Potterne	54
Worton & Marston	11
Devizes	18
Other	3

12. It is recognised that the majority of pupils live in the Potterne area however the Worton site is significantly larger and the building and grounds provide a much better education environment. It would not be possible to educate all pupils on the Potterne site as it is not large enough and there is insufficient space for outdoor learning or sport as there is no playing field.

13. The reduced level of demand for places at the school has led to increasing levels of concern from the Governors and Wiltshire Council about the financial viability of maintaining two sites. Surplus places on the Potterne site will be 50% from September 2019 and the school faces a rising deficit budget if it continues to try and maintain two sites, making the whole school potentially unviable.

14. The school's most recent five-year Budget Plan shows projected annual deficits in four of the next five years. The school moved into a small financial deficit in 2018-19 and projects an overall cumulative deficit of £179,000 by the end of 2022-23.
15. Having only one class on the Potterne site has also created safeguarding and health and safety concerns related to isolation of staff, lone working after school hours and ability to respond effectively emergency situations.
16. The Potterne site is constrained and has only two classrooms, no grassed areas and only a small hall for dining which is unsuitable for PE. The buildings and site at Worton are superior educational facilities enabling the best quality of education for local children. On the Worton site there is a large playing field, pond and wildlife area, a hall suitable for PE and three modern classrooms.
17. The school has struggled to attract all of its catchment pupils in recent years partially due, the Governors believe, to the constraints of the Potterne site. With two sites this currently limits the opportunities for whole school activities and reduces the ability for staff to work collaboratively to maximise the use of resources and raise standards. The move to one site will remove these constraints and limitations.
18. The consultation paper produced by the Governing Body suggests that moving to one site would provide a continuity of experience and provision for all children at the school. They suggest the following benefits would be achieved:
 - Improve the quality of education
 - Improved health and safety/safeguarding – reduces possibility of isolation, lone working after school hours, greater ability to respond to emergencies
 - Managing all staff and children on one site offers maximum opportunities for all children and enables staff to support each other
 - Key staff members on one site for greater time efficiency and school management
 - Resulting ability to further raise standards
 - Reduces overheads and excess costs of running two sites
 - Reduces costs associated with maintaining old buildings
 - Pupils in Key Stage 1 would benefit from the better facilities on the Worton site.
 - Easier accessibility for wraparound care for families
 - Greater potential for attracting more pupils
 - Reduce duplication and improve efficiency
 - Improve continuity of experience and provision, especially important for the most vulnerable children and those with special needs.
19. At present, Wiltshire Council funds school transport between the Potterne and Worton sites both before and after school for eligible children. The school also currently pays for a bus escort to travel with the children although this is not a Council requirement. This is a unique arrangement and has been in place since

2006. The bus used is a large coach which drops secondary pupils to Lavington School before returning to Worton, then Potterne and back to Worton. The coach would therefore be large enough to accommodate an increased number of pupils travelling from Potterne to Worton if the closure proposal is approved.

20. The Education Act 1996 and later Education and Inspections Act 2006 place a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide free home to school transport if there is no 2 mile safe walking route for children aged under eights, or 3 miles for the over eights to their local school. There is no safe walking route between Potterne and Worton so all children living in Potterne will be eligible for free transport to the Worton site. Parents who live out of catchment and apply to the school would not qualify for free transport now or after implementation of this proposal.
21. As with all home to school transport provided by the Council, the bus departs straight after school. Pupils attending after school clubs at both Potterne and Worton are collected by their parents or a parental nominee.
22. Currently Carer's Nest Pre-school operate from a mobile classroom to the rear of the Potterne site. It can be accessed without entering the school and is on land owned by the Council. The pre-school was rated by Ofsted as outstanding and wish to remain on the Potterne site. The Council is currently renewing the lease for the pre-school and this will not be impacted by the outcome of this proposal. The school intends to continue working closely with the pre-school to ensure a smooth transition for younger children.
23. Should the closure of the Potterne site be approved, the building and grounds, apart from the pre-school, will revert to the Trustees who are the Vicar and Church Wardens from St Mary's Church in Potterne. Their intentions for the site are unknown.

Consultation Response Summaries

24. The pre-statutory consultation was conducted between 8 October and 19 November 2018 and included a public meeting. A summary of all feedback received during this period can be found in Appendix A. Also included (as Appendix B) are the minutes from the public consultation meeting, held on 15 October 2018.
25. In summary, both the consultation responses and meeting were largely supportive of the proposal to close the Potterne site. Concerns were raised about the pre-school which have since been addressed as above. However Potterne Parish Council wrote a letter of objection which is included in full in Appendix C.
26. Potterne Parish Council suggested that it would be preferable to build a new school in Potterne as that is where the majority of pupils live. Whilst, this would be the ideal solution, the Council does not have sufficient funding currently available. This could be reconsidered in the future, for instance if significant local housing development increased the demand for places.

27. There were five written responses received to the statutory consultation, these are summarised below.

- Teaching Assistant from Five Lanes Primary School – Supported proposed closure. Commented that it is hard to support each other over two sites; KS1 children would have KS2 children as role models; this year younger children have only seen the older children twice, transition between KS1 and KS2 would be easier; could share resources; access for KS1 pupils to green space and the guinea pigs and chickens on the Worton site; children learn so much outside the classroom exploring and experiencing nature to support and enhance their learning.
- Marston Parish Council – support proposed closure. Marston village lies within the catchment area of Five Lanes Primary School. The solution of moving to one site is the most pragmatic, and will enable children from the village to continue the fantastic education they enjoy.
- Member of staff, parent and resident of Potterne – Support proposed closure. SEN lead is currently at the Potterne site which makes vital communication difficult. Younger children gain so much from seeing older children who conversely gain confidence and empathy spending time with younger children. Children love the space and proximity to nature that the Worton site provides. The playground at Potterne is not fit for purpose and puts people off from applying for the school. The site is hard to access and dangerous to walk to. The children's interests should be the deciding factor in this matter.
- Parent of child in Five Lanes – Appreciated the financial and efficiency / provision enhancement drivers however has concerns about transport, future use of the Potterne site and the access to the pre-school. Asks whether transport will extend to after school clubs and whether there is an ongoing commitment for its provision. Asks what will happen to the Potterne site and whether direct access will be maintained to the pre-school. Concerned about severing the links between the school and the pre-school and the losing the strength that brings.
- Parent – Supported proposed closure. Stated that Five Lanes is a small rural village school and to remain sustainable it must move with the times. There is no option for a new school in Potterne and the current school is wholly inappropriate for young people to be educated. The solution of moving to one site is the most pragmatic, and will enable children in our local villages to continue the fantastic schooling they currently enjoy.

Issues to be considered

28. Five Lanes Primary school is designated as a rural primary school as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15. There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools, although in this case the proposal is not to close the whole school, just one site. In making a decision on this proposal, Cabinet may wish to consider the following issues:

a. Displaced pupils

There would be no displaced pupils as all pupils at the school would be educated on the Worton site from September 2019. If the school ever did need to expand in the future then the Worton site is large enough to support this.

b. The likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community

Five Lanes Primary School would continue to be the catchment school for the Potterne community. The Potterne school building is not currently used by the community outside of school hours. It is solely used by the school. Feedback from parents has mainly been supportive of the closure proposal. The school events, such as school fetes and sports days are already only held on the Worton site. If the closure is approved the school would continue to attend religious celebrations at both the Potterne and Worton Churches.

As above, Carer's Nest Pre-school would continue to run from the Potterne site and has its own access. The lease for the pre-school is currently being renewed.

c. Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools

In 2018, OFSTED carried out a short inspection and judged the school as Good however the next inspection will be a full Section 5 Inspection within the next 2 years. Identified within the Ofsted letter is the need to improve outcomes for SEN pupils. Currently the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is based on the Potterne site and a high number of SEN pupils are based on the Worton site. Moving to one site will enable the SENCO to better meet the needs of these pupils. The same is true of the Maths subject leader.

Having all staff and pupils on the same site will enable a more efficient use of resources, increase collaboration, and enable pupils to support each other in their learning. More experienced teachers will be able to support those less experienced on a daily basis thus improving the outcomes of pupils.

There is no anticipated impact on neighbouring schools as there will be no displaced pupils. In the informal consultation stage, the Headteacher from Holy Trinity Primary School in Great Cheverell supported the proposed closure of the Potterne site.

d. the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools and any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase.

As detailed above, a bus already shuttles between the two sites both before and after school. This will reduce to just one journey in the morning and afternoon as the bus will no longer be required to transport pupils from Worton to Potterne.

Most families already make use of the transport provided so an increased use of motor vehicles is not anticipated.

If an additional bus was required, then there are already two bus bays marked outside of the Worton school site for children to safely disembark.

e. Alternatives to the closure of the school

This proposal will not result in the complete closure of a school, just the closure of one site. The alternative is to remain on two sites which would make the whole school potentially unviable and would not realise the additional benefits detailed above from being co-located.

It would not be possible to educate all pupils on the Potterne site as the buildings are poor and the site is small with no playing field which is a statutory requirement for KS2 pupils.

Safeguarding Implications

29. The Governing Body recognise the vulnerability of having only one class on the Potterne site. In particular they have concerns related to the isolation of staff, lone working after school hours and the ability to respond effectively to emergency situations. Moving onto one school site would eliminate these concerns as all staff would be co-located.

Public Health Implications

30. If Key Stage one pupils were educated on the Worton site, they would have access to a hall for PE, playing field and a better quality of outdoor learning. They would also have access to a wider range of after school clubs. The hall at Worton will also enable whole school worship and improve contact with the SENCO for KS2 pupils.

Corporate Procurement Implications

31. Since this proposal relates to the closure of the Potterne site, there are no direct corporate procurement implications.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

32. The Local Authority has a duty and responsibility to provide sufficient school places both in terms of mainstream and specialist provision to meet demand arising from all areas of the community. As a public body, the Council must take into account the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with "protected characteristics".
33. The Local Authority pupil forecast estimates that the future demand for places will remain below 90. If numbers ever did increase, an expansion at Worton

would be viable. Therefore sufficient school places will always be provided. The Council also has a duty to provide home to school transport for those pupils who are eligible, this will not change. The Potterne site is not physically accessible but the Worton site has ramped access. All pupils being located on the same site as the SENCo would enable a greater level of support to be provided to all.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

34. In the eventuality that the Potterne site remained open, the environmental impact of the school would be expected to remain high compared to other schools. This is based on the fact that the Potterne site would be operating with a large surplus of capacity.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

35. If the Potterne site remained open, an opportunity to maximise the effectiveness of school resources and improve the quality of education would be missed. The risks of keeping the Potterne site open are also financial; see financial implications section below. With a rising deficit budget the future of the whole school could be compromised.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

36. If the number of children living in Potterne increased significantly, then the provision of an additional classroom at Worton may be needed to provide a further 30 spaces. A second bus might also be required. These would both have financial implications for the Council.
37. In 2018, when reducing from 4 classes to 3, the school reduced their teaching and teaching assistants accordingly and consequently there would be no redundancies required for teaching staff. However, if located on one site the school may wish to reduce the number of non-educational support staff which could result in redundancies.

Financial Implications

38. If the proposal proceeds to closure of the Potterne site by August 2019, there would be no direct impact (positive or negative) on the Council's long-term revenue budget since school revenue funding in the form of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is ring-fenced from all other Council revenue streams.
39. Should the decision be taken to close the Potterne site, there could be redundancy costs associated with this decision. There will also be ongoing transport costs but potentially less than the current level.
40. These costs need to be seen in the context of projected annual deficits in four of the next five years. The school has a small financial deficit in 2018-19 and projects an overall cumulative deficit of £179,000 by the end of 2022-23.

41. Schools cannot set a deficit budget without the prior agreement in writing of the authority. For clarity, a deficit budget is one where the gross expenditure in the budget plan exceeds the total of funding, income and the balance (surplus or deficit) brought forward from the previous year. This consent is given by the Section 151 officer - The scheme of delegation allows for deficit budgets, but only for three years, and no more than 20% of the school's budget share, up to a maximum of £750,000. In certain cases these provisions can and have been breached in Wiltshire, with the consent of the s151 Officer.
42. The schools current budget share is approximately £400k and therefore a cumulative deficit of £179k exceeds the 20% threshold. Moving to one site would bring both staffing and non-staffing efficiencies alongside reduced premises overheads for the school and help towards the delivery of a balanced financial position.
43. The school is currently in receipt of a split site allowance of £65,000 in recognition of the duplicated costs of running two sites. Due to the nature of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) contained within school funding, the school will not see an immediate loss of the £65,000 as the MFG will provide a protection to ensure that there is no detrimental impact financially of moving to a single site.

Legal Implications

44. As detailed in paragraph 5, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011), proposals for the closure of an additional site at a school such as Five Lanes VC Primary School is governed by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ("Prescribed Alterations Regulations").
45. When exercising functions under these regulations regard must be had to guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), including Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers (October 2018). The procedure as set out in this report has followed that guidance.
46. The Cabinet, as the Local Authority decision maker, will need to be satisfied that the appropriate fair and open local consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received. They should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by the proposal – especially parents of children at the school. Cabinet should also turn their mind to the matters set out at Part 5 of the guidance and in particular pages 31 and 32.
47. Five Lanes is a designated rural school. However, as the proposals are for a prescribed alteration not a school closure, the considerations set out above, at paragraph 28, although important, do not have to have regard paid to them.

48. A copy of the statutory guidance can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756572/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf

Conclusions

49.

- 1) Pupil numbers at the school have dropped significantly in recent years, resulting in a significant surplus capacity and only one class of pupils remaining on the Potterne site.
- 2) As a result, the school are concerned about safeguarding and their ability to raise standards with limited resources split over two sites.
- 3) If they continue to maintain two sites, the school project a deficit budget of £179,000 by the end of 2022/23.
- 4) Considering the above, the only viable option is to close the Potterne site.

Proposal

50. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approves the proposal to discontinue (close) the Potterne site of Five Lanes Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019. From 1st September 2019 all pupils would therefore be educated on the Worton site

Reason for Proposal

51. There is insufficient demand for places at Five Lanes Primary School to sustain two school sites. Surplus places on the Potterne site will be over 50% from September 2019 and the school faces a rising deficit budget if it continues to try and maintain two sites, making the school financially unsustainable

Terence Herbert
Executive Director – Children’s Services

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15 April 2019

Appendix A

Results of the Informal Consultation October/November 2018

Interest in School	Support closure Yes/No	Comments/ Queries
Parent	Yes	Better quality of facilities at Worton
Parent and Local resident	Yes	Better facilities at Worton to improve learning and opportunities
Parent	Yes	
Parent	Yes	Safer, better facilities at Worton.
Parent	Yes	Reducing costs from running two sites makes perfect sense
Parent	Yes	Better facilities and makes more sense
Parent	Yes	Will benefit school, less outgoings, more appealing to parents
Worton Parish Councillor	Yes	Worton site is far superior, children already commute to Worton for KS2 so it's a well accepted arrangement
Parent/Governor	Yes	Environment and facilities better at Worton.
Parent/Governor	Yes	
Parent	Yes	Children are thriving since moving to the Worton site
Contractor	Yes	Better efficiency with reagrds to the IT system and support visits
Local resident	Didn't answer	Can appreciate financial problems with having two sites but suggested that a new school in Potterne would be preferable.
Local resident	Yes	Support proposed closure but asked questions regarding the future use of the school site, transport between sites and the future of pre-school
Carers Nest Pre-School	Yes	Need to ensure that the pre-school can remain on the school site in Potterne
Member of staff	Yes	Would enable all ages to interact. Better for the only teacher based at Potterne
Worton Parish Council	Yes	
Potterne Parish Council	No	Object to the loss of the school in the village where most pupils live. Think more consultation is required. Consideration should be given to building new school in Potterne.

Public meeting
Consultation on the proposal to close the Potterne site of Five Lanes CE VC Primary
School
(All pupils would be educated at the Worton site)

Monday 15th October 2018 at 6.30 p.m.
St Mary's Church, Potterne

Minutes taken by Clerk to Governors

Chairing the meeting:

Clara Davies, Wiltshire Council
Mel Cunningham, Head Teacher, Five Lanes CE VC Primary School
Steven Morse, Chair of Five Lanes Governing Body
Philip Salaman, Vice Chair of Five Lanes Governing Body

School representation:

Debbie Alvis, Assistant Head Teacher and Elder class teacher (Yr. 5 & 6) & Governor
Rhian Webber, Beech Class Teacher (R, Yr1&2) & Special Educational Needs leader (SEN)
Louise Williams, Governor & Finance Officer (Worton)
Helen Morse; Clerk to Governors and Administration Officer (Potterne)
Alana Buckingham, School SEN governor

Church representation:

Rev Ali Bridewell, vicar Potterne, Worton & Marston
Keith Thorman, Church Warden & Governor
Martyn Kemp, Salisbury Diocese
John Starling, Church Warden (& sound system assistant)

Chair of Governors, SM opened the meeting and asked Rev Ali Bridewell to lead everyone in prayer, as Five Lanes always does at their governor meetings.

SM introduced the representatives sat at the table – CD, MC PS & SM
PS talked through the school finances and explained how it works.

PS asked if there were any questions – none asked, so PS explained the options:

1. Do nothing and run into financial ruin.
2. Close entirely – both sites.
3. Close one site – either, both have merits / disadvantages.
 - a) Close Worton site, which is owned by Wiltshire Council – the site could have development potential for the Council. However this would mean that all pupils would have to go to Potterne which isn't big enough.
 - b) Close Potterne site, which is owned by the church - if it was sold then probably neither the school nor council would benefit.

We have looked at selling either – Worton has ability to grow & increase in pupil numbers. Can't maintain the Potterne property, so to sustain costs and reduce overheads propose to close Potterne.

Q: **How does the budget look with going on one site?** *Nina Potter (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: PS – We currently receive a payment for being on 2 sites and this will cease. However having one class at Potterne with a lone teacher is not a good environment & costs are duplicated, i.e. 2 x security, insurance, etc. Costs will be reduced if move to one site and hopefully will be more attractive for prospective parents.

Q: **Is there a time frame on the move to Worton & how sustainable is that move for the future?**

Justine Hanson (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)

A: PS - we need to submit a 5 year plan – currently on 2 sites, 1 site is sustainable for at least 5 years. SM asked how many do you think would be in reception? JH - think it will be similar to that now.

CD said we do receive data on children born in catchment area, this year it was 12, year after 20, then 16 then 13. Further information is due any day, so this is basis for the future forecast for the school. In recent years the school has taken about 55% of children living in the catchment.

Q: **Worton has better outside space, but is there room for the whole school in the current building?** *Lee Miller (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: MC replied that Worton has 3 classrooms, currently one is being used as a library. Temporarily one class would move into the library and the school would like to add a mobile building to replace the library. We are aware that it is a competitive market & we need to make the school as appealing as possible to attract more children. MC said that feedback from prospective parents over the past few years say that the Worton building is more appealing & modern than Potterne. DA added that before the Worton School was federated with Potterne there were 3 classes in the building and the Foundation / Early years classroom was positioned so the children can go straight outside.

Q: **Would you still consider a bus monitor?** *Justine Hanson (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: MC – yes, we are the only school in Wiltshire that operates with an escort. We also run a ‘Buddy’ system on the bus, where older children look after younger ones.

Q: **How many children travel from Potterne to Worton daily?** *Louise Watson (Potterne resident & ex-pupil)*

A: Approx. 35 - 40

Peter Balls chair of Parish council expressed concern over the number of children that will attend the school from Potterne, once it moves to Worton.

Q: **Is there is room at Potterne?** *Amelia Mortimer, (Potterne resident & pupil parent)*

A: PS – No, the school also only has a very small hall which is deemed ‘unfit for purpose’ and the outside space is better at Worton.

Richard Gamble, Wiltshire Councillor said all local schools are going through the same issues with low numbers and are advertising. Vulnerability of this plan will be that more children will need to travel further, either by bus or car, to their first school.

SM said that he experienced putting a Reception child on a bus, as living in Worton meant travelling to Potterne for Key Stage and it was a concern, however the bus monitor & other children soon allayed fears for both the child / parent. The general consensus is that as the children get older they need the outdoor space more for exercise, sporting activities and wellbeing – this is key for the children.

Q: Do we know how many attend from Poulshot, e.g. v's going to Rowde? *Justine Hanson, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: *PS – haven't got access to numbers. MC said we have had Poulshot children attending our school.*

Q: I agree with the sentiment of sending a small child to school on the bus, however I would drive if necessary. Our family chose the school due to Carers Nest pre-school provision. How does Carers Nest sit within the Consultation? *Nina Potter, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

Q: I am also concerned about what will happen to Carers Nest Pre-school (which is situated at the back of Potterne school site). *Emma Blackmore, (Manager Carers Nest Pre-School)*

A: *CD said that the pre-school building is owned by Wiltshire council and it is situated on council land, so there are no changes proposed.*

Q: Can I please have it in writing that Wiltshire Council own the land. *Emma Blackmore, (Manager Carers Nest Pre-School)*

A: *CD – made a note of request.*

Peter Balls (Potterne Parish Council) said that the Parish council are in process of making the school a community building (?) (Didn't hear what he said, as he refused the microphone).

PS said that he had been asked 'can we build a new school?' If we did find land, who would fund it? No-one is willing to pay. The demise of rural schools is an issue we have to face, especially where larger town schools are being built. There is not a lot we can do. Economic decisions are the ones outline by Claire Perry.

Peter Balls (Potterne PC) expressed concern that Potterne residents won't chose to send their children to Worton, leading to the closure due to depletion in pupil numbers.

SM replied that others have different views and will view it as a positive for children to be on a more modern spacious site. The bottom line is that we cannot sustain the current position, the school is in debt and it will get worse quickly & need to act now to reduce deficit.

Peter Balls (Potterne PC) said that the proposed closure has happened all too quickly and there has been miscommunication.

SM replied that this is part of the Consultation process, which is being adhered to as stipulated by Wiltshire Council guidelines.

Q: It looks like you have all made up your minds? *Amelia Mortimer (Pupil parent & Potterne resident).*

A: *SM we have gone through much deliberation over the past few years and our decision hasn't been an easy one – this is the best sustainable decision and only governed by what is right for the school's sustainability and what is best for the children.*

A: *PS said our best option is to move to Worton, but we have to follow strict guidance by Wiltshire Council and the Government Consultation process.*

Q: **Have you asked the parents if they would send their children to the school?** *Peter Balls, (Potterne Parish Council)*

A: *DA – all the parents present at this meeting have chosen to send their children to our school.*

A: *MC – all responses received to date from parents have been positive.*

Q: **Is there going to be any provision for additional parking at Worton?** *Jason Canning, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident).*

A: *PS – we have previously had permission to use to a privately owned field at the rear of the school, accessed through Cedar Close, if we need provision for special events, i.e. the fete.*

Q: **How many children have left through the year?** *Jason Canning, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident).*

A: *PS - We have lost some children during a school year, but these factors happen in every school and have a fairly neutral effect, it is not due the education provided.*

Richard Gamble said that currently Poulshot children come under the Rowde catchment area. When a single site for Five Lanes School is established / completed, the Worton site will be more attractive to those in a wider catchment area.

CD said that parents can choose wherever they want their children to attend school. Schools can apply for a change in their catchment area but that consultation with other schools and parents would be necessary.

Richard Gamble said that Rowde might not agree to any changes, but in the context of this change it might be worth investigating this. No-one can predict the future of rural schools, it depends on development and the local plan on where developments should go – historically not in villages, but this doesn't give sustainability and may give a solution for redevelopment.

Lee Miller said we send our children to Five Lanes School and the teaching is outstanding. There is the added benefit of the outside space at Worton and first impressions of the school will be more appealing for prospective parents.

Peter Balls said I cannot see that Worton can compete with DAPS & Holy Trinity. I do live in the village and when my children were in primary education, the school in Potterne wasn't right for them, so they didn't attend it. I don't believe that this should be a closed decision and need to look further at getting a new school in Potterne.

SM said we would welcome support that you can give or anyone else. This is a voluntary role the governors do and they would welcome written views from the Parish council.

DA said that we should remember that whilst the consultation is ongoing we should consider that there is one young teacher on the Potterne site teaching one class alone, although she

does have 2 teaching assistants, it is remote. The decision process is lengthy enough and consideration should be given to the vulnerability of any teacher working with one class at the Potterne.

MC – Our young NQT teacher could leave the school at some point and we would struggle to appoint a skilled practitioner to fill any vacancy, due to working remotely. The budget is so tight that TA's are buying resources themselves, staff members are paying for gravel, fuel, vehicle business insurance to use their own cars for transportation between the 2 sites – I'm lucky that our staff are so generous. Being on one site will be much more efficient in terms of teaching, special educational needs, sharing resources, cost savings with utilities, to name only a few of the benefits.

My husband and I chose to send our children to Five Lanes School, as the pastoral care is amazing and the provision they have received is exceptional. I believe that probably a third of children at the school are from outside the villages of Potterne, Worton or Marston. *Alana Buckingham, (Pupil parent).*

Our pre-school would like to work more with the school and we do encourage the children to come into school, but it is a shame that we don't see more of each other. *Emma Blackmore, (Carers Nest Manager).*

SM said that it has been a difficult year and staff constraints and time have been challenging. We would like to continue to work with Carers Nest.

Q: Can a transition from preschool still continue?

A: *DA – yes we will certainly try and continue with this.*

Q: Will after school club and breakfast club continue? *Jason Canning (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: *MC – yes we will definitely want to continue with this – wrap around care is a selling point for the school, especially for working parents.*

Q: How will that work? *Justine Hanson, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: *MC – not sure yet as this is the Consultation process, we cannot make plans yet.*

Q: What is the next step in the process? *Justine Hanson, (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: *PS – 6 week Consultation for everyone to view and respond. The responses will then be looked at, collated and the Five Lanes Full Governing Body will decide whether to proceed to statutory consultation, which means a Statutory Notice will be issued in the local paper. There is then a 4 week period for people to make comments. The results of this consultation will then be present to the Council's Cabinet for them to make a final decision.*

Q: What happens if the church decide to sell the Potterne building? *Lee Miller (Pupil parent & Potterne resident)*

A: *The building is owned by the Trustees, who are the vicar and 2 church wardens. Salisbury Diocese are in the process of trying to get it transferred to the Diocese. The Diocese need to work closely with Wiltshire Council, but it is too early in the process to make any decisions on the site. (It is an awkward site).*

The Salisbury Diocese would like an interest in the Worton site if the Potterne site is sold, as they want to still be involved with the church school and see it as an opportunity to put something right. Martyn explained that historically when Worton & Marston Schools were sold, the Diocese interest was not transferred to the new school (which was built on High Street, Worton), so the Diocese want to rectify this. CD explained that this would be possible, as usually the buildings of Voluntary Controlled Schools are owned by the Diocese or Trustees.

A: SM – *this could take a long time as it is a complicated process.*

Janice & Mervyn Underwood said that it will be sad to see the Potterne school site close and we have good memories of it, but we do understand the difficulties being faced. (Potterne residents).

SM – we as Governing board & senior leadership team need to close one site to benefit from the superb teaching for the children and in our view the Worton site is the best option available. We welcome all responses and any help in deciding the future of our children's education.

CD said that the minutes of meeting do form part of the evidence pack.

PS – Can everyone please ensure they have signed the meeting registration form to confirm their attendance?

SM thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.

Informal Consultation Response from Potterne Parish Council

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE FIVE LANES VC PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE AT POTTERNE (ALL PUPILS WOULD BE EDUCATED AT THE WORTON SITE)

Please take time to complete this form so that we can take account of your views.

Only one response per person will be accepted. We will not pass on your personal information to a third party. Your views will be treated as strictly confidential.

1. Please indicate your interest in the school (e.g. current parent, parent of pre-school child, Governor, Member of staff, local resident, from neighbouring school).

Parent/Carer Member of Staff Local Resident
 Governor at School Prospective Parent Other, specify

2. Do you agree with the proposed closure of the Potterne site from Easter 2019?

YES NO Please tick appropriate box

If you wish to give your reasons for supporting the closure please do so below.

If you do not support the closure or believe that there are other options that should be considered please give details below.

Please see attached detailed reasons why Potterne Parish Council do not agree with the closure of the Potterne site. The Parish Council feel the timescale is too short and should be re-visited with a longer timescale than current. Continued on following pages.

By Hand: Please return the form to the school office by noon on 19 November 2018, or
 By email: send to clerk@fivelanes.wilts.sch.uk
 By Post: Clerk of the Governing Body, Five Lanes Primary School, Blackberry Lane, Potterne, SN10 5NZ.

FIVE LANES VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

1. Potterne Parish Council does not support the closure of the Potterne site of Five Lanes VC Primary School. This objection is based on the principle of closing the school in such a comparatively large Wiltshire village and the manner in which the proposal has been drawn up in isolation given the profound implications for the affected children and village in the long-term. The Parish Council accepts that the current Potterne site has limitations but believes that the proposal to concentrate the school at Worton is a short-term measure that will likely lead to both Potterne and Worton losing their school altogether over time.

Objection in Principle

2. Potterne Parish Council strongly opposes the proposal to close the Potterne site on the basis that the primary school aged catchment profile makes the plan unsustainable in the medium term, 'immediacy' of the closure and absence of any other courses of action being presented to the village at this late stage.

3. Instead the Parish Council would like to see a number of short-term options being developed, including an alignment with other schools in the vicinity that might be a better option for the affected pupils and in the medium/long-term for the children of Potterne.

4. Consideration should also be given to building a new school in the medium term, in the vicinity of Butts Farm¹; as was proposed in 2000 and which might mean the development of further housing in the village so as to jointly justify such expenditure, meet Wiltshire Council's housing needs and keep Potterne vibrant in the long-term.

Objection in Detail

5. Not only is the principle of the Potterne site closure challenged but there are also several points of significant detail that the Parish Council believes to be wrong:

- **Catchment Profile².** The primary school age demographics do not support the proposal.

¹ Planning for this site was well advanced and the synergy that Butts Farm would generate when combined with a footpath/cycle way into Devizes (with its secondary school) via Drew's Pond is significant.

² Statistics provided by Clara Davies, Acting Head of School Place Commission, Wiltshire Council in e-mail dated 15 Oct 18.

- Of the 85 pupils currently on the Five Lanes role: 55 (65%) have Potterne postcodes, 18 (21%) have Devizes postcodes, 11 (13%) have Worton and Marston postcodes and 1 (1%) has a Melksham postcode.
- There are 103 primary aged pupils living in Potterne currently, of which 55 attend Five Lanes – 53%. Beyond that: approximately 31% of pupils living in Potterne attend either The Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy, Great Cheverell or Dauntsey Academy Primary School in West Lavington – both of which continue to have excellent reputations and are approximately twice the maximum size Five Lanes can be – with a further 34% attending various other schools in the Devizes area.
- There are 39 primary aged pupils living in Worton and Marsden, of which 11 attend Five Lanes – just 28% of only 39 pupils.
- Meaning that:
 - 79% of all current Five Lanes pupils will need to travel to/from the Worton Site on Day 1.
 - Worton and Marsden does not have sufficient pupils living within them to sustain a school without attracting pupils from surrounding village schools and this seems unlikely given the quality of schools in question.
 - The proposal carries high risk because it assumes that existing and new children from Potterne and Devizes will continue to attend Five Lanes School, despite the trend to date and the popularity/availability of places in other excellent schools in the vicinity.
 - The proposal has a dependency on free transport being provided to pupils from Potterne to attend the school in Worton. Whilst this might be the case today, this free provision would be questionable should the planned cycle path/footpath be built that links Potterne to Devizes via Drew's Pond.
- **Timings.** The amount of time given to consider such an important issue for the village is extremely limited and appears to be driven by the Financial Year much more than the interests of the affected pupils and their parents. Meaning that:
 - The wider stakeholders have not been properly consulted.

- Any proposed closure would be better aligned to the end of the school year as this would cause less disruption to the vast majority of pupils and parents - who live in Potterne and Devizes.
- The current plan must assume a drop in Year 1 entrants from Sep 19 because applications for Year 1 entry across Wiltshire need to be submitted by 15 Jan 19 and yet a final decision on whether the Year 1 Class will have moved from the Potterne to Worton sites will not be announced until Feb 19.
- **Transport.** Wiltshire Council has confirmed that free buses would be provided to transport pupils from Potterne to Worton at no increased cost to the Council, but how does this affect the 18 pupils from Devizes that currently attend the school and would the school be truly viable from the outset and in the long term without 21% of its current pupils coming from Devizes?
- **Pre-School.** The connection between the Pre-School and Primary School co-located on the Potterne Site in terms of feeder numbers is significant. Whilst there is no indication at present that the Pre-School will close, its future will be less secure if pupil numbers drop and/or its current site in Potterne is developed once the Primary School vacates the site³.
- **Consultation.** For a matter with such profound implications for the long-term vibrancy of Potterne, consultation and opinions should have been sought from across the village before the proposal to close the Potterne Site in favour of the Worton site at such short notice was presented as the only option by the School Governing Body. The proposal should consider other options, including whether children from Potterne would be better served by attending other local schools in preference to Worton. Furthermore the Parish Council believes that the Public was misinformed at the meeting in St Mary's Church on 15 Oct 18 insofar as it was wrongly intimated that the Pre-School would continue irrespective of the closure of the Potterne site and this cannot be assured, and that any income gained by the Church from the redevelopment of the Potterne site would be invested in the Worton site - that is also likely to be wrong.

Conclusion

5. Potterne Parish Council is determined to ensure that the village retains its Primary School in the medium to long-term but thinks this is unlikely if the proposal is followed through. It believes that the underpinning assumptions of the proposal are inaccurate and that the parents of affected children and the

³ The Pre-School is located on land owned by Wiltshire Council and yet its utilities are provided from the School located on land owned by the Church.

villages as a whole have been inadvertently misled in terms of the future of the pre-school, free transport arrangements for existing and future children from Devizes and the reinvestment dividend from any development of the Potterne site. Moreover the Parish Council believes that the closure of the Potterne site is being rushed through without due regard for the current pupils/academic year, that the uncertainty about the future of the school on 15 Jan 19 will result in fewer pupils entering the school in Sep 19 than might otherwise be the case and that the closure, if agreed, would be better at the end of the 2018/19 Academic Year.

6. The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to become engaged in a wider stakeholder group that could take forward these issues in a more collegiate manner that it feels is necessary for such an important issue, with its profound implications for the village in the present and future.