

STATEMENT TO CABINET FOR 30TH NOVEMBER 2021 BY

RUSHALL PARISH COUNCIL

In respect of

**AGENDA ITEM 9: DISPOSAL PROGRAMME UPDATE – DISPOSAL OF UPAVON
FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Background:

Upavon Primary School was initially closed and mothballed for various reasons including demand based on future pupil numbers partly due to some perceived uncertainty regarding Upavon Military Camp.

Upavon children have subsequently travelled to neighbouring primary schools ie Rushall, Woodborough etc. Although Upavon and Rushall have adjoining parish boundaries there is no public footpath joining the two villages and the volume and size of traffic prohibits safe non carbon passage to Rushall Primary School.

Due to increased pupil numbers at Rushall Primary School a temporary classroom was added to the school site with an initial planning approval expectancy of 5 years. Prior to the five year planning approval lapse the need for the additional provision need was reviewed by Wiltshire Council and an extension granted due to the uncertainties in requirement that would result from Army Re-Basing.

Since the mothballing of the school the future of the Military Camp and the significant number of residence living behind the wire has become more certain and there is a significant housing development nearing completion in Upavon.

For over 10 years Rushall has been engaged in a ‘Safe Pedestrian Access Scheme’ within the village so that residents can walk within the village and the children can walk to school. The access scheme is currently looking for a WC highways substantive funding grant to progress the footpath closer to Rushall Drove but there is at least one further phase to achieve that goal.

The housing development at Upavon Whistledown included a footpath that just fell short of reaching Rushall Drove. The original plans for this footpath/cycleway were intended to link with the next phase of the Rushall footpath but Wiltshire planners allowed the developers to cut short the original footpath plan. Rushall did not receive any infrastructure funding from the Whistledown development and are continuously funding the footpath development that will benefit both villages from the Rushall precept and Pewsey CATG funds.

Sale of the Former Primary School:

There was no local consultation with respect to Wiltshire Councils plan to dispose of the Upavon Primary School site. Rushall Parish Council only became aware of the Wiltshire Council proposal on the 23rd November 2021 when reading the Cabinet Meeting Agenda.

The sale of the Upavon Primary School site does not appear to be consistent with pupil provision need in the area while Army Re-Basing is not fully complete and there is still a temporary classroom provision at Rushall Primary School.

If the sale of the site proceeds it will probably be to a developer for further housing which will lead again to adequate pupil provision debates. The rationale for the disposal of this site does not seem to be clear and transparent to the local residents in the area.

If Wiltshire Council proceed with the disposal of the Upavon Former Primary School site after justifying adequate pupil provision in the Pewsey Area, then a non-carbon provision should be included as part of the site sale decision to facilitate Upavon children to be able to safely walk to Rushall Primary School.

Colin Gale
Chairman Rushall Parish Council
24th November 2021

Wiltshire Council Response:

Rather than seeking authority to dispose of the former school, the paper seeks to declare the site surplus and available for review. After Cabinet there will be consultation both internally and externally, through local elected members and relevant town/parish councils, to consider options for the site before any decision to dispose of the site is made. The process is set out in Appendix One of the report.

Rushall Parish Council Response:

The Executive Summary requests that the 4 sites be declared as surplus but the Proposals which are what the Cabinet will vote on quite clearly states:

“That Members confirm that freehold interest of the 4 assets can be sold by the Council.”

The Members are clearly being asked to note the position in respect of disposal and are being asked to agree the freehold sale. The Members are not being asked to agree consultation to consider options for the site before any decision of the site is made.