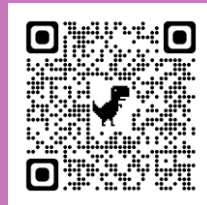


**“Your  
voice  
matters”**

## **Home to School Transport catchment to nearest school proposal**

28 April 2025 – 30 June 2025

### **Consultation Results**



**Find out more at  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations)**

## Contents

Purpose of Consultation .....	3
The consultation process.....	3
Feedback on the proposals.....	3
The findings.....	4
Executive summary .....	4
Conclusion.....	9
Full Consultation Results .....	11
Q4. What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be? .....	13
Q5. To Align with most councils and our neighbouring local authorities .....	20
Q6. To reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport .....	21
Q7. To align with the Department for Education statutory guidance .....	22
Q8. To make the policy clearer .....	24
Q9. Align with some schools in Central Bedfordshire already to nearest school .....	25
Q10. To promote fairness amongst those wishing to access school transport across Central Bedfordshire .....	26
Q11. Additional benefits.....	27
Q12. Overall question on the proposal .....	29
Q13. Do you have any comments on the proposed change to nearest school?.....	38
Q14. Suggestions on cost saving measures to consider.....	47
E-mail submitted letters .....	52
Schools analysis.....	53
Online questionnaire response analysis.....	53
Demographics .....	65
Appendix i: Q.4 comments by stakeholder group.....	71
Appendix ii: Q.13 comments by stakeholder group .....	94
Appendix iii: Q.14 comments by stakeholder group.....	111
Appendix iv: written letter consultation submissions .....	121

## Purpose of Consultation

The purpose of the consultation was to ask residents and major stakeholders such as schools for their feedback on a proposed change to the Home to School Transport provision in Central Bedfordshire to remove the 'catchment school' criteria in our current policy for 'eligible children' of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years old) and to provide transport to the nearest suitable school (with available places) only. If agreed, this change will apply only to new applications and will not apply to pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

## The consultation process

The survey ran from 28 April 2025 to 30 June 2025. Local residents, schools, town and parish councils and stakeholders were encouraged to comment on the proposed policy changes by completing a short online survey. Paper response forms were also provided on request. The consultation ran for a period of 9 weeks.

Activities included:

- Press release, which was picked up by Leighton Buzzard Observer and BBC Beds, Herts and Bucks
- E-bulletin
- E-mail 1 – sent to 46,153, 50% displays, 2.24% click through rate (521 click throughs)
  - E-mail 2 – sent to 46,093, 49% displays, 0.91% click through rate (208 click throughs)
  - E-mail 3 – sent to 44,087, 57% displays, 1.62% click through rate (408 click throughs)
- E-mail 4 – sent to 42,372, 58% displays, 1.54% click through rate (650 click throughs)
- Social media
  - Facebook – 14 posts with 31,140 impressions
  - Twitter/X - 13 posts with 4,015 impressions
  - Instagram 13 posts with 4,608 engagement

\*engagement is the number of interactions your content received from users - likes, comments, shares, saves, etc.

## Feedback on the proposals

In total, 796 responses were received for this consultation survey.

How they accessed the questionnaire:

- 450 (56%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the mobile version
- 320 (40%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through a pc/laptop

- 26 (3%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the tablet version

We did not receive any completed paper copies of the questionnaire.

We received responses within the questionnaire from Sandy Secondary School, Harlington Upper School, Robert Bloomfield Academy, Arnold Academy, Holywell School, Houghton Conquest Lower School, Marston Moreteyne VC School, Parkfields Middle School, Redborne School, Samuel Whitbread Academy, Stratton School, Westoning Lower School as well as representatives of the Meridian Trust and Pyramid Trust, The Diocesan Board of Education of St Albans, a Member of an Education Appeal Panel, Campton and Chicksands PC, Barton-le-Clay Parish Council, Clophill Parish Council, Central Bedfordshire Councillor and Resident and a Ward Councillor.

We also received written letters from residents, The Pyramid Trust representing 9 schools, Sandy Secondary School, Harlington Lower school and Sundon Lower School, a representative of Bedford Schools Trust (BEST) representing 10 schools, Marston Moreteyne Parish Council, and from CBC Cllrs Versallion, Jamieson, Clinch, Smith and Summerfield

In total we received 35 written letters/emails. The correspondence received was analysed and the main themes can be found in Appendix iv: at the end of the report. The comments received, reiterated what had been heard from the responses within the questionnaire.

In total we received 1,639 open comments within the free comment boxes of the consultation questionnaire.

To make sense of the feedback received, we have employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the headline quantitative measures, followed by coding of the free text comments to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with the order. In addition to this regular analysis, we have also broken down the responses by the major stakeholders, affected or potentially affected by this proposed change. The codes we generated identified frequently mentioned comments and concerns. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

When summarising these consultation findings in other reports please ensure that the findings of this report are quoted accurately, and that a link to this report is provided.

Please note, all quotes are shown as received, so may contain spelling mistakes, and percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## The findings

### Executive summary

In total we received 796 responses to the consultation questionnaire. When considering the responses consideration needs to be given to the characteristics of respondents. The 2021 Census indicates that 37,410 households in Central Bedfordshire (31%) have dependant children living

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

with them. 83,350 households in Central Bedfordshire (69%) do not have dependant children living with them

In terms of responses to the consultation the majority of responses 499 (67%) came from parents / carers with dependant children and 247 (33%) came from residents who didn't have dependent children living with them. This means that residents with non dependant children are under represented in terms of responses to the consultation and parents / carers are over represented in terms of responses to the consultation when compared with the breakdown of households in Central Bedfordshire.

Respondents were first asked what impact they thought the proposed change would have.

- **Lack of parental choice** 166 comments received
- **Costs to parents who can't afford to transport** 142 comments received
- **Will save money** 115 comments received
- **Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road** 96 comments received
- **School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers** 93 comments received
- **Will be difficult if siblings at different schools** 81 comments received
- **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing** 77 comments received
- **Don't do it** 75 comments received
- **Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)** 73 comments received
- **Consider the impact of children in villages** 69 comments received
- **Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school** 57 comments received
- **Separates friends** 55 comments received
- **Will be increasing carbon footprint** 43 comments received
- **Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments** 41 comments received
- **Supportive comment** 35 comments received
- **3 to 2 tier comment** 33 comments received
- **If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay** 28 comments received
- **Money that could be used elsewhere** 27 comments received
- **Can't see that it will save money** 21 comments received
- **Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change** 16 comments received
- **More traffic fumes, from cars** 15 comments received
- **Less traffic around schools** 14 comments received
- **Inconvenience/disruptive** 10 comments received
- **Not a one size fits all/means test parents** 10 comments received
- **More info needed** 10 comments received
- **No impact for most** 8 comments received
- **This would be in line with neighbouring LA's** 8 comments received
- **Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round** 7 comments received
- **Look at other ways to raise the money** 7 comments received
- **Makes it clearer** 6 comments received

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- **Encourage active travel** 5 comments received

The below table shows the responses to the quantitative questions (Q5-Q12).

# Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Question	Overall	Parent/Carer accessing HTST (incl. SEND)/future access	Parent/Carer not accessing HTST	Other residents (excluding those that identified themselves as Parent/Carer)
<b>Q5. To Align with most councils and our neighbouring local authorities</b> (785 responded)	<b>55% (426) disagree</b> 34% (259) agree 13% (100) neither	<b>333 responded</b> <b>78% (260) disagree</b> 10% (33) agree 12% (40) neither	<b>163 responded</b> <b>50% (82) disagree</b> 40% (65) agree 11% (18) neither	<b>241 responded</b> 22% (53) disagree <b>63% (152) agree</b> 14% (33) neither
<b>Q6. To reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport</b> (791 responded)	<b>48% (380) disagree</b> 41% (318) agree 12% (93) neither	<b>334 responded</b> <b>72% (240) disagree</b> 16% (53) agree 13% (43) neither	<b>163 responded</b> 42% (68) disagree <b>44% (72) agree</b> 14% (23) neither	<b>246 responded</b> 18% (44) disagree <b>76% (187) agree</b> 6% (15) neither
<b>Q7. To align with the Department for Education statutory guidance</b> (791 responded)	<b>54% (424) disagree</b> 36% (287) agree 10% (80) neither	<b>335 responded</b> <b>78% (261) disagree</b> 13% (44) agree 9% (30) neither	<b>162 responded</b> <b>45% (73) disagree</b> 43% (70) agree 12% (19) neither	<b>245 responded</b> 24% (59) disagree <b>68% (166) agree</b> 8% (20) neither
<b>Q8. To make the policy clearer</b> (787 responded)	<b>55% (428) disagree</b> 34% (273) agree 11% (86) neither	<b>331 responded</b> <b>80% (265) disagree</b> 11% (36) agree 8% (26) neither	<b>163 responded</b> <b>47% (77) disagree</b> 39% (64) agree 15% (24) neither	<b>244 responded</b> 22% (54) disagree <b>67% (163) agree</b> 12% (29) neither
<b>Q9. Align with some schools in Central Bedfordshire already to nearest school</b> (782 responded)	<b>53% (415) disagree</b> 35% (277) agree 12% (90) neither	<b>331 responded</b> <b>76% (252) disagree</b> 13% (43) agree 12% (40) neither	<b>160 responded</b> 49% (78) disagree 38% (61) agree 13% (21) neither	<b>242 responded</b> 22% (53) disagree <b>69% (167) agree</b> 9% (22) neither
<b>Q10. To promote fairness amongst those wishing to access school transport across Central Bedfordshire</b> (783 responded)	<b>55% (430) disagree</b> 37% (287) agree 9% (71) neither	<b>333 responded</b> <b>77% (256) disagree</b> 15% (50) agree 8% (27) neither	<b>162 responded</b> <b>46% (75) disagree</b> 39% (63) agree 15% (24) neither	<b>244 responded</b> 26% (63) disagree <b>69% (168) agree</b> 5% (12) neither
<b>Q11. Additional benefits</b> (790 responded)	<b>54% (432) disagree</b> 36% (284) agree 9% (74) neither	<b>334 responded</b> <b>79% (263) disagree</b> 12% (40) agree 10% (33) neither	<b>161 responded</b> <b>48% (77) disagree</b> 39% (63) agree 12% (19) neither	<b>246 responded</b> 23% (57) disagree <b>71% (175) agree</b> 6% (15) neither
<b>12. Overall question on the proposal</b> (791 responded)	<b>62% (495) disagree</b> 32% (257) agree 5% (39) neither	<b>333 responded</b> <b>88% (293) disagree</b> 10% (33) agree 2% (7) neither	<b>164 responded</b> <b>58% (95) disagree</b> 33% (54) agree 9% (15) neither	<b>246 responded</b> 27% (66) disagree <b>67% (165) agree</b> 6% (15) neither

**Q13. Comments on the proposed change to nearest school**

- **School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers** 79 comments received
- **Lack of/right of choice** 76 comments received
- **Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school** 72 comments received
- **Don't do it/re think proposal** 62 comments received
- **Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road** 60 comments received
- **Supportive comment** 59 comments received
- **Costs to parents who can't afford transport** 50 comments received
- **Consider the impact of children in villages** 48 comments received
- **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing** 43 comments received
- **Will be difficult if siblings at different schools** 36 comments received
- **Will be increasing carbon footprint** 33 comments received
- **3 to 2 tier comment** 32 comments received
- **If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay** 29 comments received
- **Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments** 25 comments received
- **Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)** 24 comments received
- **Separates friends** 22 comments received
- **Won't save money** 21 comments received
- **Will save money** 20 comments received
- **Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round** 19 comments received
- **Evaluate cases/one size doesn't fit all** 15 comments received
- **More info needed** 15 comments received
- **Find savings elsewhere** 13 comments received
- **Need cycle lanes/pathways** 12 comments received
- **Should be a choice between at least 2 nearest schools** 6 comments received
- **This would be in line with neighbouring LA's** 5 comments received

**Q14. Suggestions for other cost saving measures that should be considered**

- **Council efficiencies/stop wasting money** 45 comments received
- **More safer walking/cycle routes** 43 comments received
- **Evaluate usage, no 1 child in bus/taxi – optimization** 37 comments received
- **Look at saving through less staff at CBC** 24 comments received
- **Encourage active travel, cycling/walking to school** 19 comments received
- **Look at other ways to get funding** 14 comments received

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- **Parents should pay for transport to chosen school if not the nearest** 13 comments received
- **Sell seats on the bus** 12 comments received
- **Funded car pooling** 11 comments received
- **Sort 3 to 2 tier system** 11 comments received
- **Partial funding** 10 comments received
- **Electric buses** 9 comments received
- **Look at sorting out SEND provision to find savings** 8 comments received
- **Should get free transport to catchment** 8 comments received
- **Leave as is/ don't do it** 7 comments received
- **Smaller vehicles** 6 comments received
- **Cut/stop cllr allowances** 6 comments received
- **Scrap all funded school transport** 6 comments received
- **School/CBC having their own buses** 6 comments received
- **Raise taxes** 5 comments received
- **Consult all schools and academies** 4 comments received
- **Anything other than disrupting children's education** 4 comments received

## Conclusion

Whilst overall results for the proposed change indicate that 62% (495) of respondents disagree with the proposed change, levels of support vary across different groups according to their circumstances.

The majority of the respondents 42% (335) to the consultation were parent/carers either currently receiving home to school transport, parent/carers with a child that might require home to school in the future or parent/carers of children with SEND. Amongst this group **88% (293) disagreed** with the proposal citing a lack of parent/carer choice (88 comments), the costs to those parent/carers who are unable to afford to pay for home to school transport (83 comments), they also thought that this would affect the schools themselves with regards to funding and becoming over/undersubscribed and the admissions and financial situation that may ensue (57 comments), there was also a concern that it would be difficult for parent/carers if the siblings are at different schools (55 comments), in terms of logistics, sibling support and having the time to transport them to separate schools, particularly if working parent/carers. There was also a feeling amongst the parent/carers that the proposed change to nearest school, would actually create more traffic on the road (53 comments), where parent/carers are driving their children to a catchment school, or for buses out of villages that could be taking children to different schools.

There were also other parent/carers whose child does not access home to school transport 21% (164) who responded to the consultation. Levels of disagreement in this group for the proposal were lower at **58% (95)**, and 33% (54) were in agreement with the proposal. From the free comments they mentioned the lack of parent/carer choice as their top concern (32 comments). However they also said that they believed the proposed change will save money (29 comments).

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

There was a concern over parent/carers that may not be able to afford the costs to pay for home transport (25 comments) if their child wanted to go to a school that is not their nearest. There were also comments that just said that they didn't think the proposed change should be implemented (14 comments) and that it could result in more cars/buses on the road (13 comments).

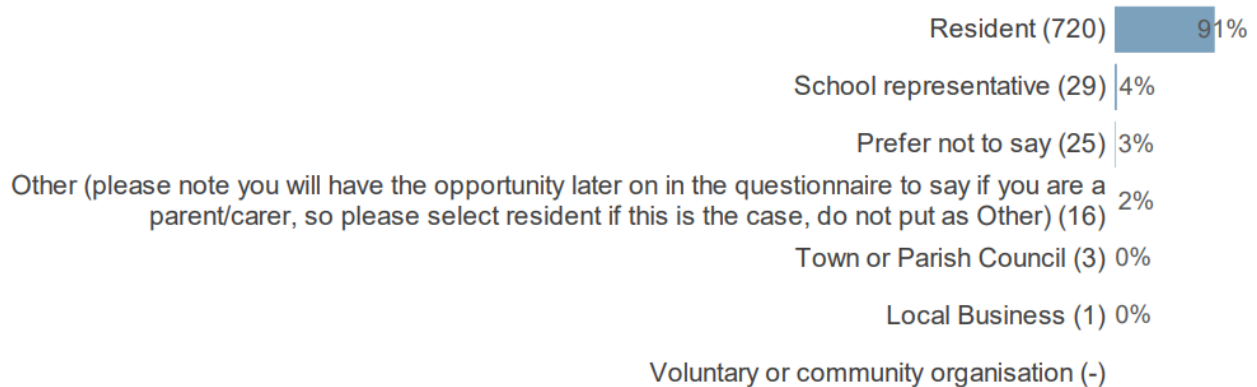
There were also responses from other residents that do not have dependent children living with them. These residents at 31% (247) of respondents were under represented in the consultation in comparison to the 69% percentage of households without dependent children in Central Bedfordshire. Amongst this group of respondents **67% (165) agreed** with the proposed change. From the free comments there was a feeling that this proposed change would save money (74 comments) to the residents of Central Bedfordshire. There were some respondents (27 comments) who cited that there is a lack of choice for the parent/carers into which school their child should attend. There was also a feeling that the proposal could result in more car/buses on the road and around schools (23 comments) and also the costs (20 comments) to parent/carers who may not be able to afford to pay for transport. There were also several supportive comments (19 comments) regarding the proposal.

All 123 schools were invited to take part in the consultation. Responses were submitted from a number of schools / school representatives (29) in the online questionnaire. Amongst this group within the online questionnaire, 76% (27) disagreed with the proposal citing a lack of choice for the parent/carer on their child's school (14 comments), the costs to parents (10 comments) who may not be able to afford transport. There was also the concern (8 comments) over school funding and the affects of over/undersubscription and admission numbers. The school respondents to the online questionnaire, also felt that this would affect the feeder school system and schools within Trusts (4 comments). The same number of school respondents (4 comments) also mentioned that as the 3-2 tier transition has still to be completed, that the proposal should wait until all are in 2 tier as their top concerns. Also with 4 comments that said not to go ahead with the proposal.

From the 35 email submissions, from residents, representatives of Schools within Central Bedfordshire and Town and Parish councils cllrs, the main points cited were to not go ahead with the proposal (18 comments), the concern over the implications the proposal would have for future school funding (15 comments) and the over/under subscriptions/admission numbers. Some respondents said (11 comments) there needed to be a consideration of the impact this proposal would have on children in villages. The costs to parents who may not be able to afford transport (11 comments) were also mentioned, as well as the lack of choice in schooling, could be damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing (11 comments). The rest of the comments, reflected what had been heard throughout the consultation responses. There was concern raised by some ward town and parish councils cllrs pointing out specific consequences regarding the split of villages, mentioning Clophill as an example of this.

## Full Consultation Results

Q1. Are you responding as: (please select one)



The above graph shows that of the 796 respondents to the online consultation, 794 answered the question of who they are responding for, 91% (720) were residents, 4% (29) were representatives of schools, 3% (25) Preferred not to say, 2% (16) said Other, Town or Parish Council (3), Local Business (1)

- Sandy Secondary School (15)
- Harlington Upper School (2)
- Robert Bloomfield Academy (2)
- Arnold Academy (1)
- Holywell School (1)
- Houghton Conquest Lower School (1)
- Marston Moreteyne VC School (1)
- Parkfields Middle School (1)
- Redborne (1)
- Samuel Whitbread Academy (1)
- Stratton School (1)
- Westoning Lower School (1)

If Town or Parish Council, please specify:

Campton and Chicksands PC

Barton-le-Clay Parish Council

Clophill Parish Council

We also received a written letter from Marston Moreteyne Parish Council

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

If other, please specify:

Parent (8)

Carer (1)

Member of an Education Appeal Panel

Someone who works in Central Bedfordshire

Pyramid Schools Trust

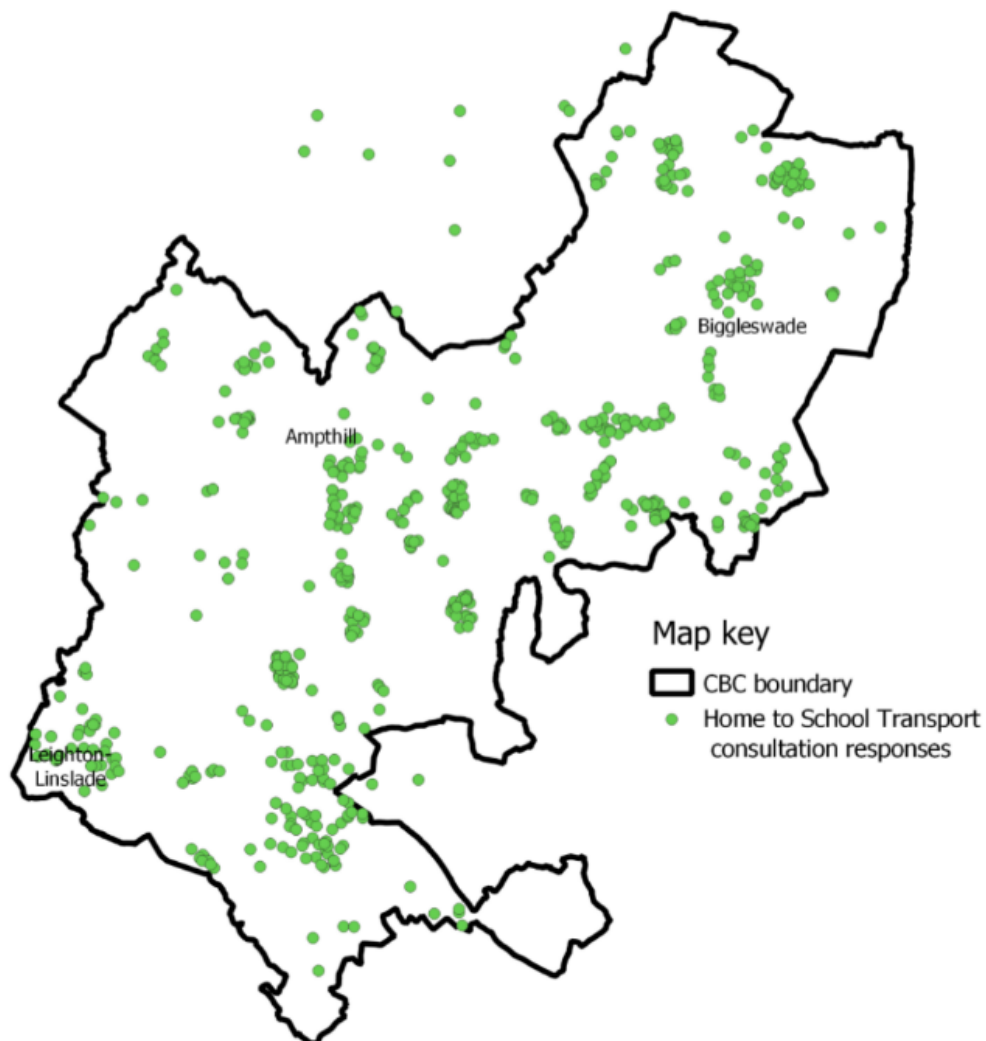
Diocesan Board of Education of St Albans

Central Bedfordshire Councillor and Resident

Ward Councillor

The following map shows that responses came from across Central Bedfordshire.

### Home to School Transport consultation 2025



© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

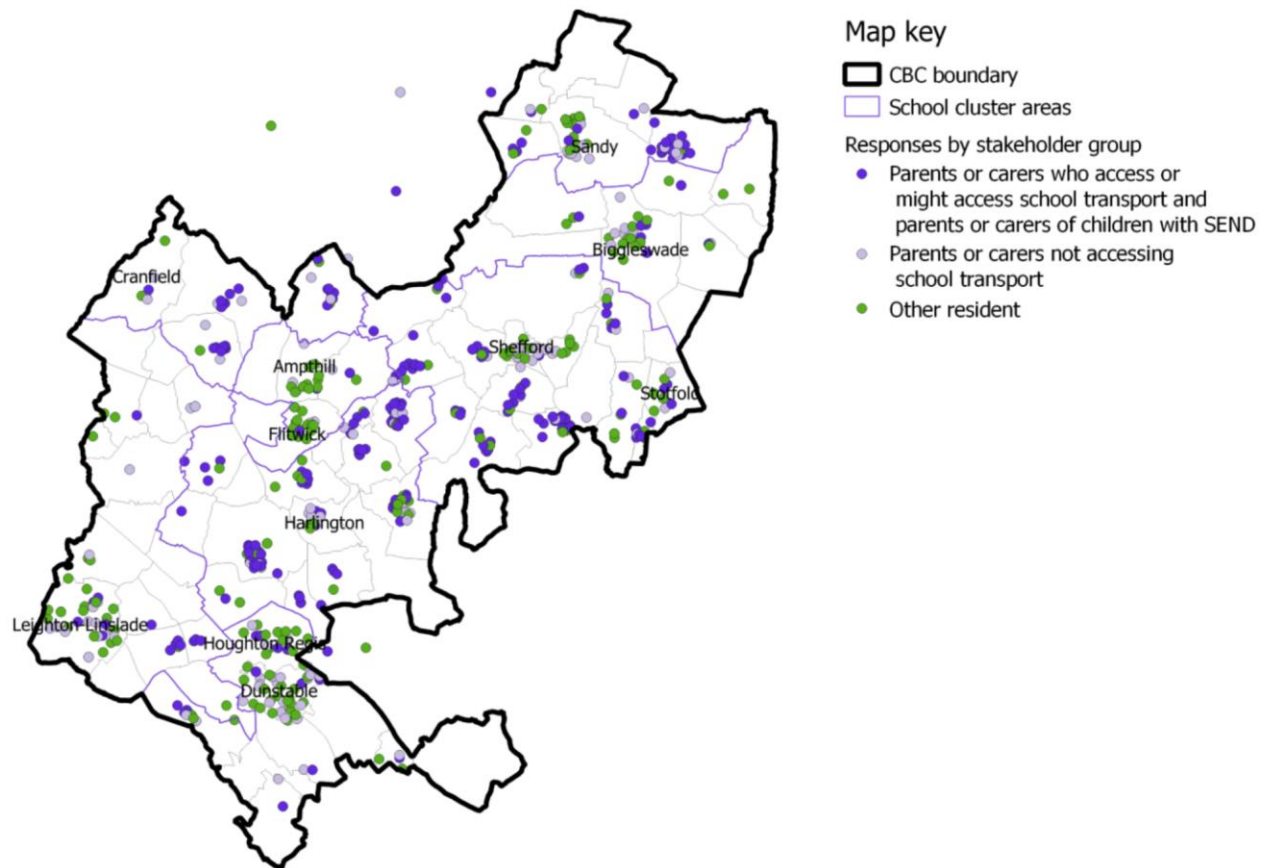
As well as looking at overall results, we have broken the analysis down further into three resident stakeholder groups, so the analysis will have the overall responses, then these are further broken down into the following groups for the questions.

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- Parent/Carer accessing HTST (incl. SEND)/future access
- Parent/Carer not accessing HTST
- Other residents (excluding those that identified themselves as Parent/Carer)

The following map shows responses broken down by the different resident stakeholder groups.

**Home to School transport: responses by stakeholder group**



© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

There is also a separate section to the report setting out the analysis and responses from schools

### Q4. What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be?

Of the 796 respondents to the consultation, **723** chose to comment on this question. The main themes have been listed below. Please note that within the themes totals there were also comments from Schools, these comments can be found in the Schools analysis section towards the end of the report.

Theme	No. of comments
Lack of parental choice	166

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Theme	No. of comments
Costs to parents who can't afford to transport	142
Will save money	115
Will result in more parents' cars/buses on the road	96
School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	93
Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	81
Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	77
Don't do it/negative impact	75
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)	73
Consider the impact of children in villages	69
Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	57
Separates friends	55
Will be increasing carbon footprint	43
Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments	41
Supportive comment	35
3 to 2 tier comment	33
If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay	28
Money that could be used elsewhere	27
Can't see that it will save money	21
Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change	16

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Theme	No. of comments
More traffic fumes, from cars	15
Less traffic around schools	14
Inconvenience/disruptive	10
Not a one size fits all/means test parents	10
More info needed	10
No impact for most	8
This would be in line with neighbouring LA's	8
Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round	7
Look at other ways to raise the money	7
Makes it clearer	6
Encourage active travel	5

### Other

- Should be a choice between 2 nearest schools (4)
- Should be to catchment (3)
- Difficult to predict as not sure what future pupil numbers will be (2)
- Fairer (2)
- Increased costs (1)
- Look at staffing at CBC (1)
- Negative impact on residents (1)
- Will be able to choose nearest rather than linked school by trust (1)

We have provided an additional breakdown table to show how views and themes may differ across different resident groups. Detailed in the table are the findings for Question 4: What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be?

The analysis is for all themes above 5 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Lack of/right of choice	88	Lack of/right of choice	32	Will save money	74
Costs to parents who can't afford transport	83	Will save money	29	Lack of/right of choice	27
School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	57	Costs to parents who can't afford transport	25	Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	23
Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	55	Don't do it/negative impact	14	Costs to parents who can't afford transport	20
Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	53	Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	13	Supportive comment	19

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Consider the impact of children in villages	51	School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	13	Money that could be used elsewhere	19
Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	49	Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	12	If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay	15
Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	48	Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)	11	school funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	12
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)	46	If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay	9	Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)	11

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Don't do it/negative impact	44	Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	8	Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	11
Separates friends	40	Will be increasing carbon footprint	8	Consider the impact of children in villages	11
Feeder school/ Pyramid Trust comments	29	Look at other ways to raise the money	7	Don't do it/negative impact	9
Will be increasing carbon footprint	25	Supportive comment	7	Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	8
3 to 2 tier comment	20	Separates friends	6	Look at other ways to raise the money	7
Can't see that it will save money	13	Money that could be used elsewhere	5	Less traffic around schools	7

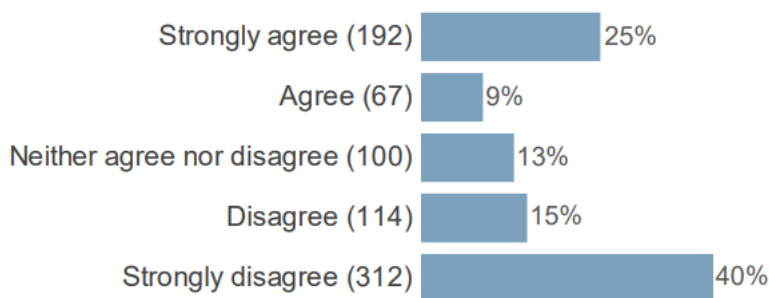
Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
More traffic fumes, from cars	11	Less traffic around schools	5	This would be in line with neighbouring LA's	6
Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change	11	Consider the impact of children in villages	5	Can't see that it will save money	5
Will save money	10	3 to 2 tier comment	5	Separates friends	5
Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round	6				
Inconvenience/disruptive	6				

Some examples of the comments for Question 4, broken down into the main themes by stakeholder, can be found in Appendix i: at the back of this report

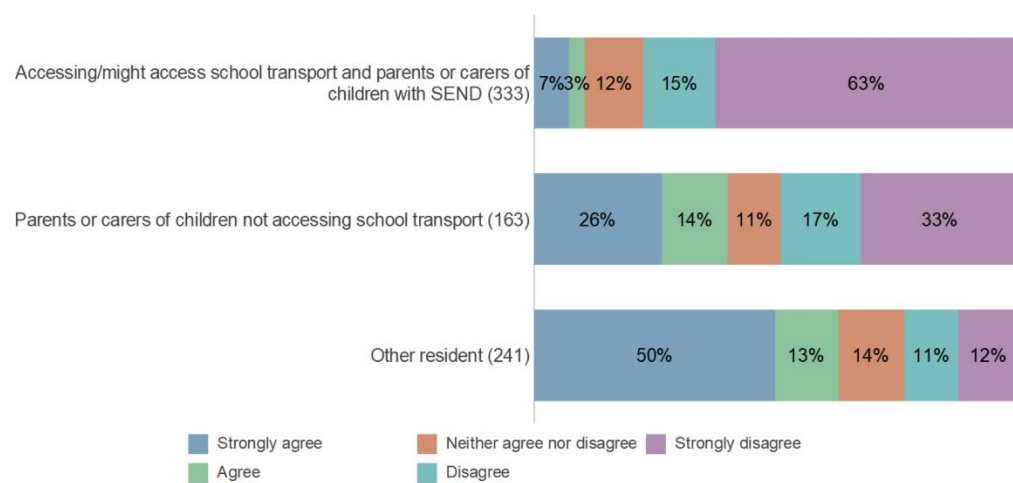
## Q5. To Align with most councils and our neighbouring local authorities

**Q5.** How far do you agree or disagree that Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) mainstream home to school transport provision should align with the approach of many local authorities (LAs) including all our near neighbours?



The above graph shows that of the 785 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree that CBC's mainstream school transport provision should align with many local authorities, **55% (426) were not supportive** with 40% (312) strongly disagree and 15% (114) disagree. 34% (259) were supportive, with 25% (192) strongly agree and 9% (67) agree. 13% (100) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



**Stakeholder breakdown:**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**333 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport , 163 are from parents / carers not accessing transport, 241 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 241 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire.

Other residents (241) are most likely to **agree (63%)**, that school transport provision should align with the approach of many local authorities with 23% disagreeing and 14% neither

Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (163) are most likely to **disagree (50%)** with 40% agreeing and 11% neither

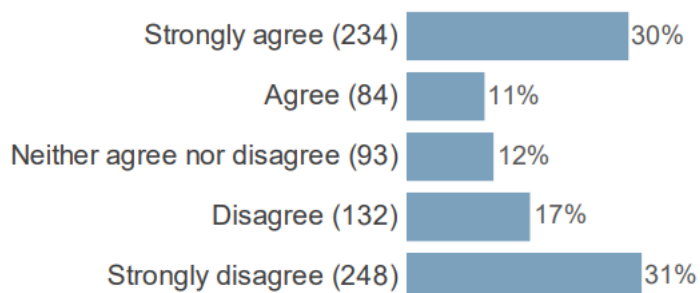
Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (333) **are most likely to disagree (78%)**, with 10% agreeing and 12% neither

## Q6. To reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport

### Financial considerations

**Q6.** How far do you agree or disagree with the Council looking to manage and reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport?

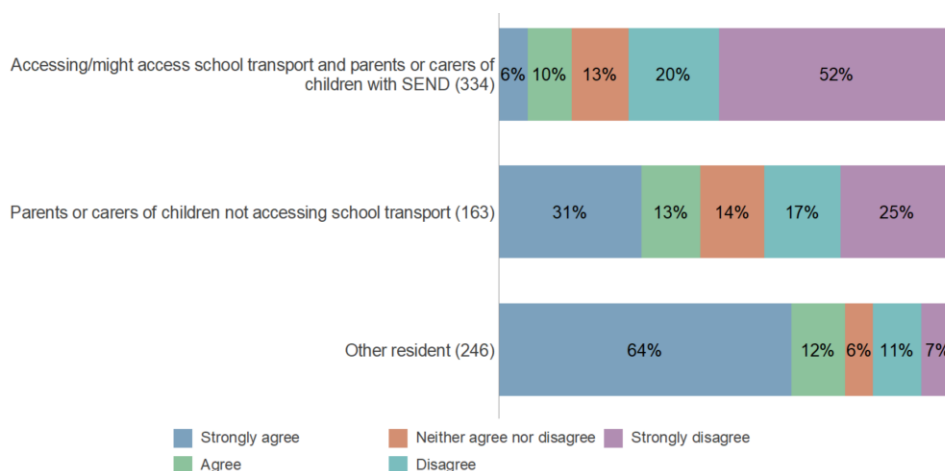
This could achieve a saving in the region of £8.9 million up to 2031/32



The above graph shows that of the 791 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree with the council looking to manage and reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport, 48% (380) were not supportive with 31% (248) strongly disagree and 17% (132) disagree. 41% (318) were supportive, with 30% (234) strongly agree and 11% (84) agree. 12% (93) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



### Stakeholder breakdown:

**334 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport , 163 are from parents / carers not accessing, 246 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 246 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire.

Other residents (246) are most likely to **agree (76%)**, with the Council looking to manage and reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport with 18% disagreeing and 6% neither

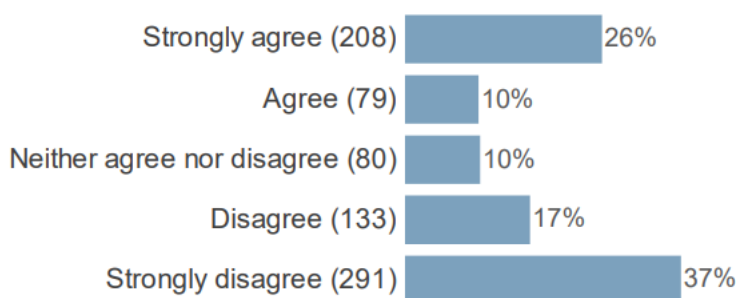
Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (163) are most likely to **agree 44%** with 42% disagreeing and 14% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (334) **are most likely to disagree (72%)**, with 16% agreeing and 13% neither

## Q7. To align with the Department for Education statutory guidance

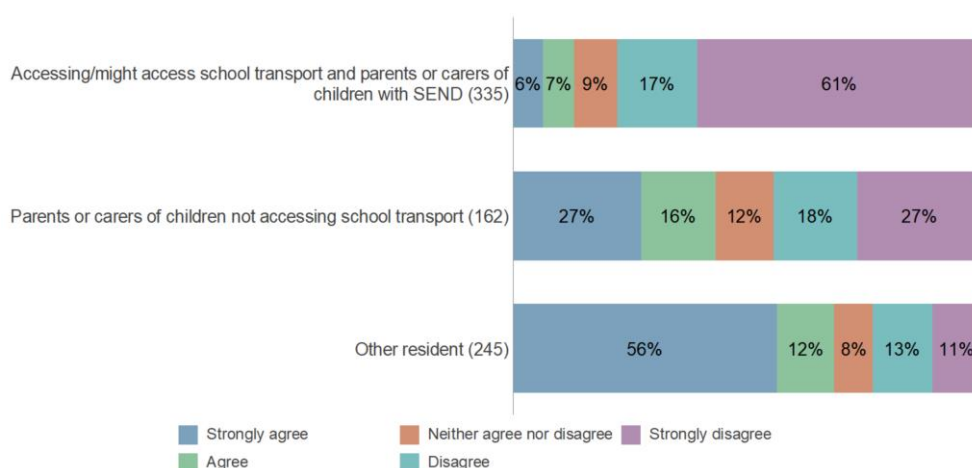
**Q7.** How far do you agree or disagree that Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) mainstream home to school transport provision should align with the DfE statutory guidance, which states nearest suitable school with available places?

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



The above graph shows that of the 791 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree with the proposal that CBC's mainstream home to school transport should align with DfE statutory guidance, 54% (424) were not supportive with 37% (291) strongly disagree and 17% (133) disagree. 36% (287) were supportive, with 26% (208) strongly agree and 10% (79) agree. 10% (80) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



### Stakeholder breakdown:

**335 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport , 162 are from parents / carers not accessing transport, 245 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 245 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

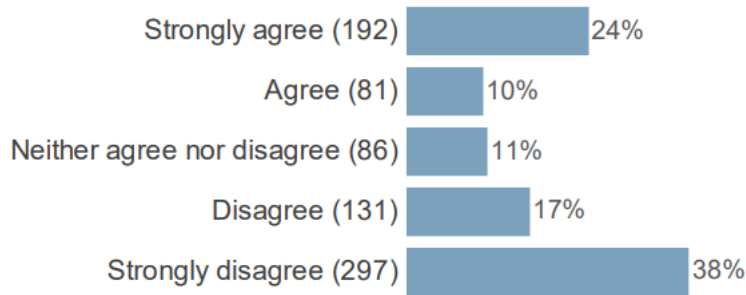
Other residents (245) are most likely to **agree (68%)**, that mainstream home to school transport should align with DfE statutory guidance with 24% disagreeing and 8% neither

Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (162) are most likely to **disagree (45%)** with 43% agreeing and 12% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (335) **are most likely to disagree (78%)**, with 13% agreeing and 9% neither

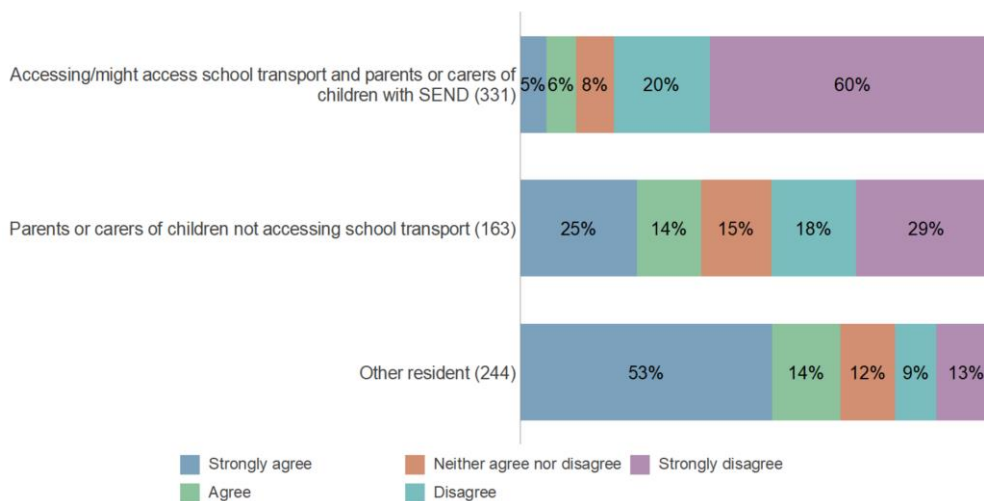
## Q8. To make the policy clearer

**Q8.** How far do you agree or disagree that providing CBC's mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only, will make the policy easier to understand?



The above graph shows that of the 787 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree that providing CBC's mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only will make the policy easier to understand, 55% (428) were not supportive with 38% (297) strongly disagree and 17% (131) disagree. 34% (273) were supportive, with 24% (192) strongly agree and 10% (81) agree. 11% (86) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



### Stakeholder breakdown:

**331 responses are from parents carers accessing transport , 163 are from not parents / carers not accessing transport, 244 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 244 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

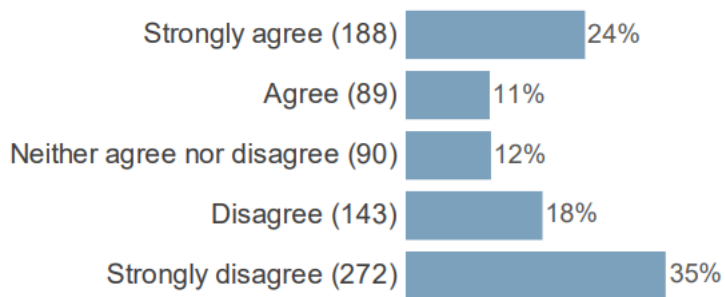
Other residents (244) are most likely to **agree (67%)**, that providing CBC's mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only will make the policy easier to understand with 22% disagreeing and 12% neither

Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (163) are most likely to **disagree (47%)** with 39% agreeing and 15% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (331) **are most likely to disagree (80%)**, with 11% agreeing and 8% neither

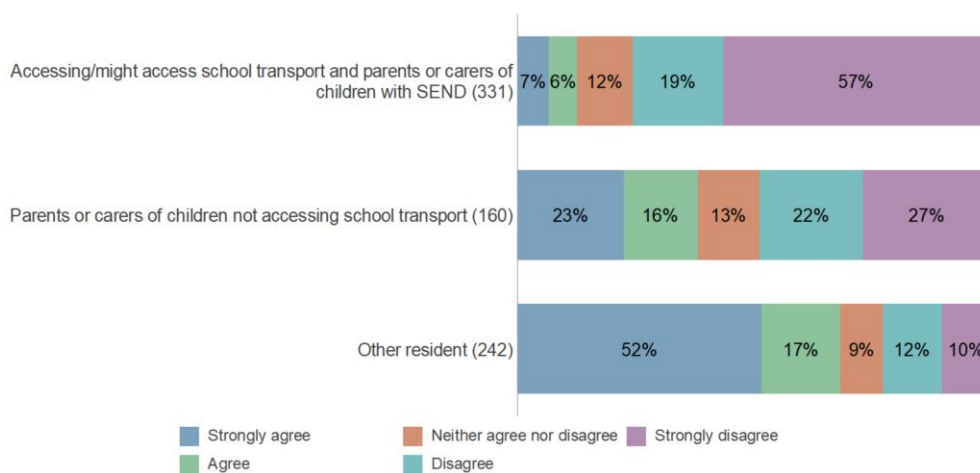
## Q9. Align with some schools in Central Bedfordshire already to nearest school

**Q9.** Given the mixture of different admissions policies across Central Bedfordshire how far do you agree or disagree that CBC's provision of mainstream home to school transport should be more in line with the schools whose admissions policy is nearest school?



The above graph shows that of the 782 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree CBC's mainstream home to school transport provision should align with schools admissions policy of nearest school, 53% (415) were not supportive with 35% (272) strongly disagree and 18% (143) disagree. 35% (277) were supportive, with 24% (188) strongly agree and 11% (89) agree. 12% (90) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



**Stakeholder breakdown:**

**331 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport, 160 are from parents /carers not accessing transport, 242 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 242 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

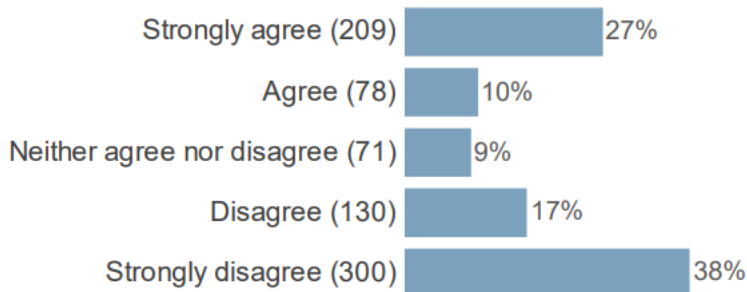
Other residents (242) are most likely to **agree (69%)**, CBC's mainstream home to school transport provision should align with schools admissions policy of nearest school with 22% disagreeing and 9% neither

Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (160) are most likely to **disagree (49%)** with 39% agreeing and 13% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (331) **are most likely to disagree (76%)**, with 13% agreeing and 12% neither

## **Q10. To promote fairness amongst those wishing to access school transport across Central Bedfordshire**

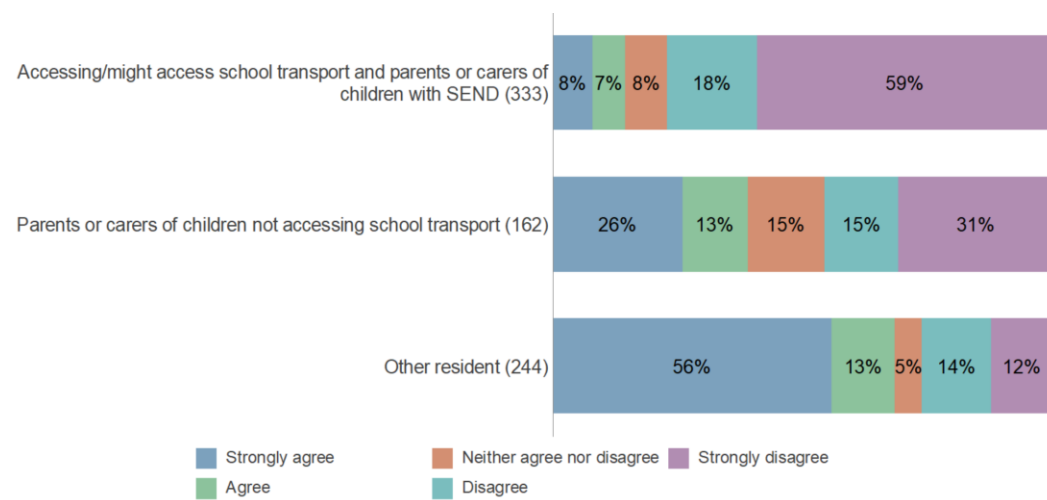
**Q10.** How far do you agree or disagree that providing CBC's mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only, is fairer by ensuring every eligible pupil receives the same offer for transport?



The above graph shows that of the 788 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree that the change in CBC's mainstream home to school provision to nearest school only, would promote fairness, 55% (430) were not supportive with 38% (300) strongly disagree and 17% (130) disagree. 37% (287) were supportive, with 27% (209) strongly agree and 10% (78) agree. 9% (71) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



### Stakeholder breakdown:

**333 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport, 162 are from parents / carers not accessing transport, 244 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 244 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

Other residents (244) are most likely to **agree (69%)**, the change in CBC's mainstream home to school provision to nearest school only, would promote fairness, with 26% disagreeing and 5% neither

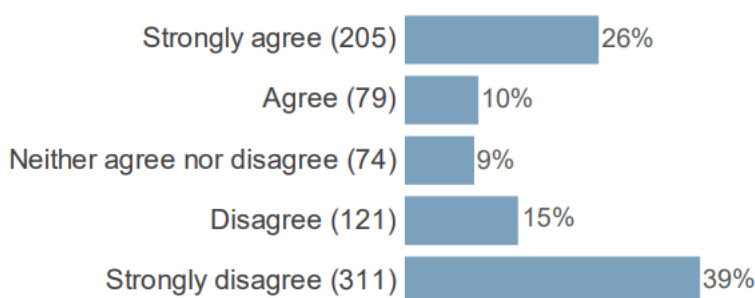
Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (162) are most likely to **disagree (46%)** with 39% agreeing and 15% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (333) **are most likely to disagree (77%)**, with 15% agreeing and 8% neither

## Q11. Additional benefits

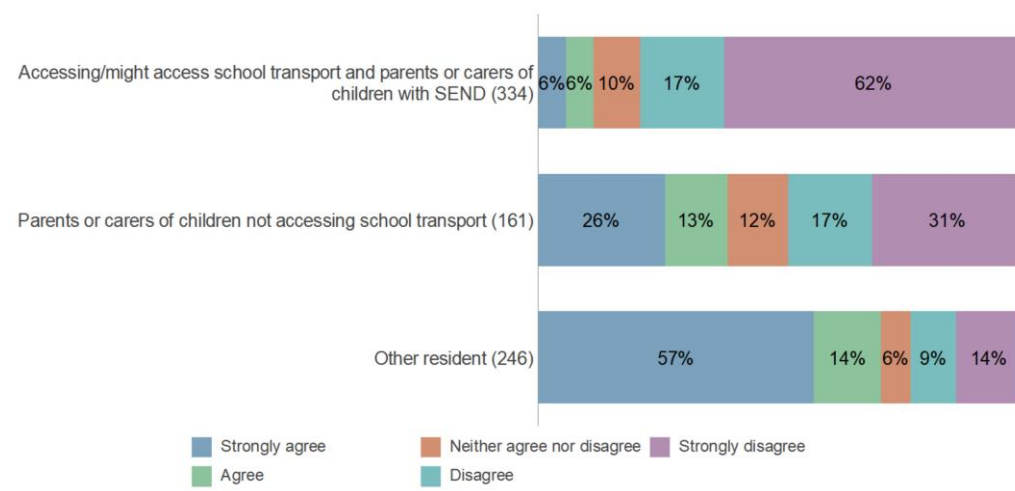
**Q11.** How far do you agree or disagree that providing CBC's mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only, will help the Council meet its statutory duty to provide sustainable travel to school and support the Councils aim of reducing emissions and its long term carbon footprint? As a result of attending their nearest school, fewer pupils will require school transport, and more could travel by foot/bicycle. Independent travel can be a good way to gain independence and the shorter journeys and/or less buses contribute to improving air quality and a lower carbon footprint

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



The above graph shows that of the 790 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree that providing mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only will reduce emissions and the long term carbon footprint, 54% (432) were not supportive with 39% (311) strongly disagree and 15% (121) disagree. 36% (284) were supportive, with 26% (205) strongly agree and 10% (79) agree. 9% (74) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Further breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



### Stakeholder breakdown:

**334 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport, 161 are from parents / carers not accessing transport, 246 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 246 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

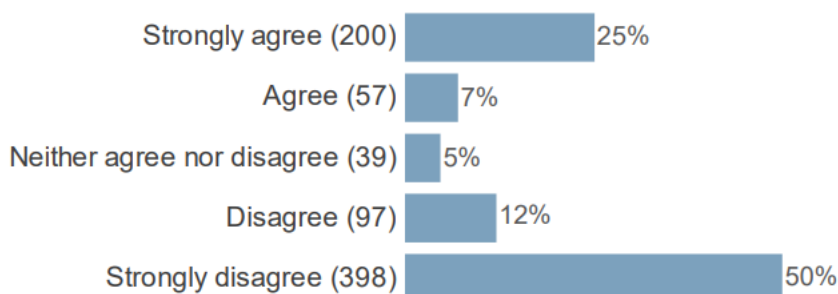
Other residents (246) are most likely to **agree (71%)**, the proposal will help the Council meet its statutory duty to provide sustainable travel to school and support the Councils aim of reducing emissions and its long term carbon footprint with 23% disagreeing and 6% neither

Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (161) are most likely to **disagree (48%)** with 39% agreeing and 12% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (334) **are most likely to disagree (79%)**, with 12% agreeing and 10% neither

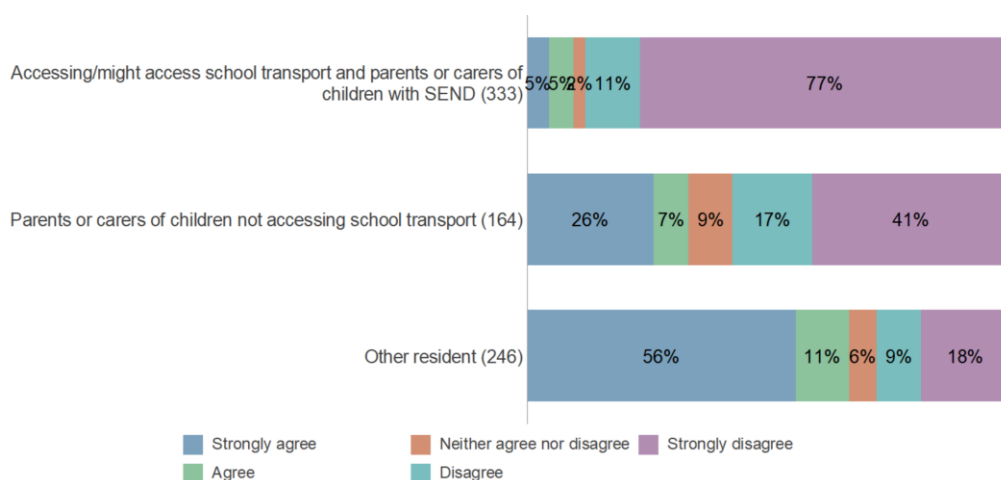
## Q12. Overall question on the proposal

Q12: How far do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to remove the 'catchment school' criteria and to provide mainstream home to school transport to nearest school only?



The above graph shows that of the 791 respondents who answered this question, when asked how far they agree or disagree with the proposed change, 62% (495) were not supportive with 50% (398) strongly disagree and 12% (97) disagree. 32% (257) were supportive, with 25% (200) strongly agree and 7% (57) agree. 5% (39) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Breakdown of responses to this question by stakeholder



**333 responses are from parents / carers accessing transport, 164 are from parents / carers not accessing transport, 246 are from other residents.**

It should be noted that 246 responses (31%) reflects an under representation of responses from households with no dependent children who comprise 69% of the population of Central Bedfordshire

Other residents (246) are most likely to **agree (67%)**, with the proposal to remove transport to catchment schools with 27% disagreeing and 6% neither

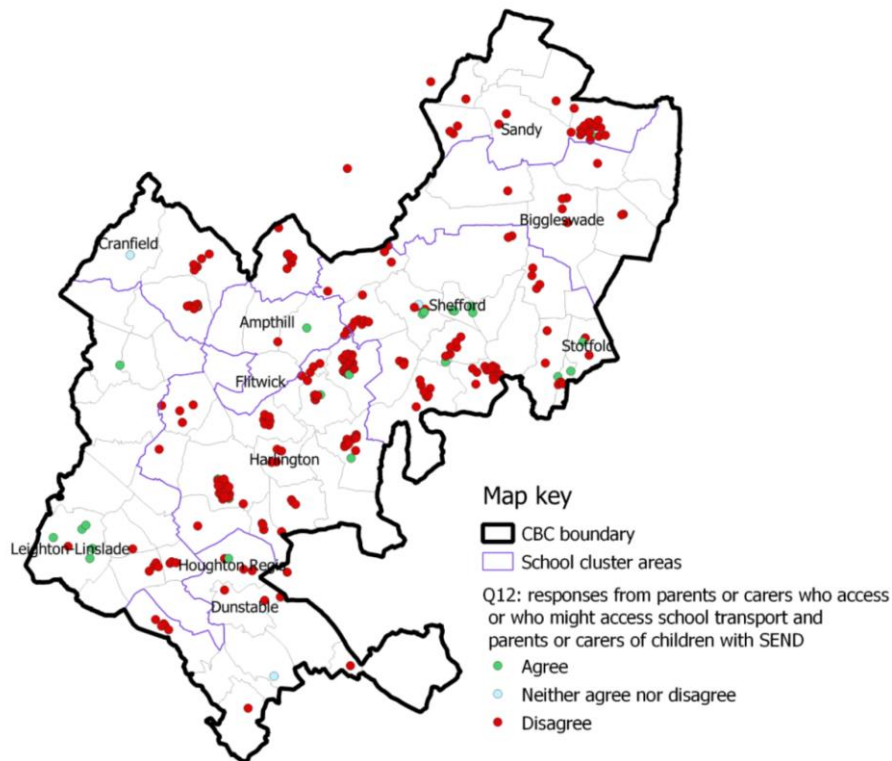
Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport (164) are most likely to **disagree (58%)** with 33% agreeing and 9% neither

Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND (333) **are most likely to disagree (88%)**, with 10% agreeing and 2% neither

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

The map below illustrates the location of responses from parent/s carers who are **Accessing/might access school transport and Parents/Carers of children with SEND relating to the overall proposal to remove transport to catchment schools and levels of agreement and disagreement.**

### Home to School transport: Q12 - parents accessing transport

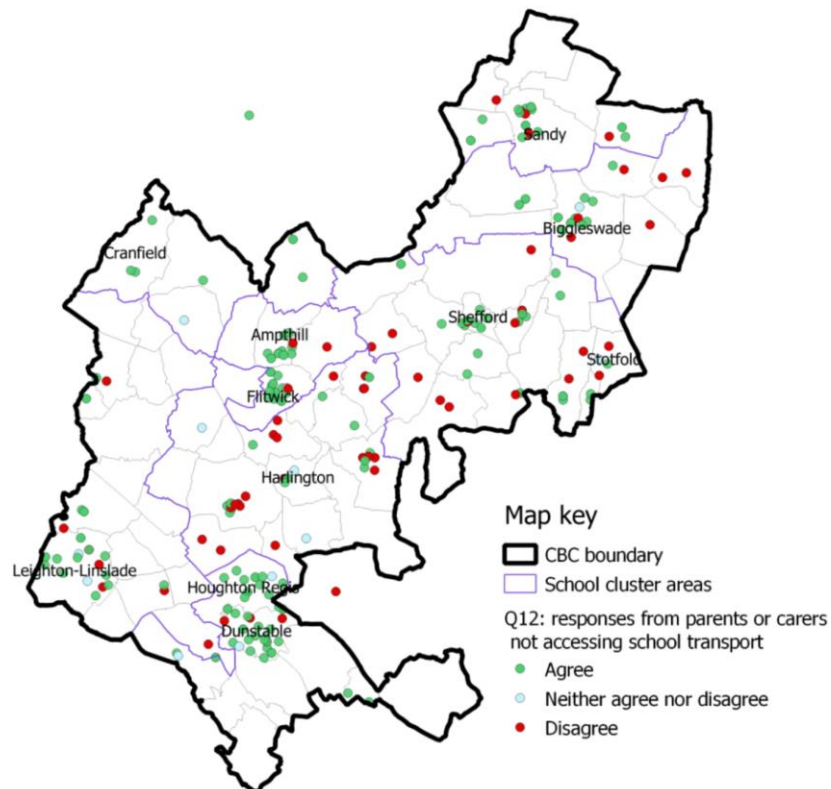


© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

The map below illustrates the location of responses from **Parents or carers of children not accessing school transport relating to the overall proposal to remove transport to catchment schools and levels of agreement and disagreement**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

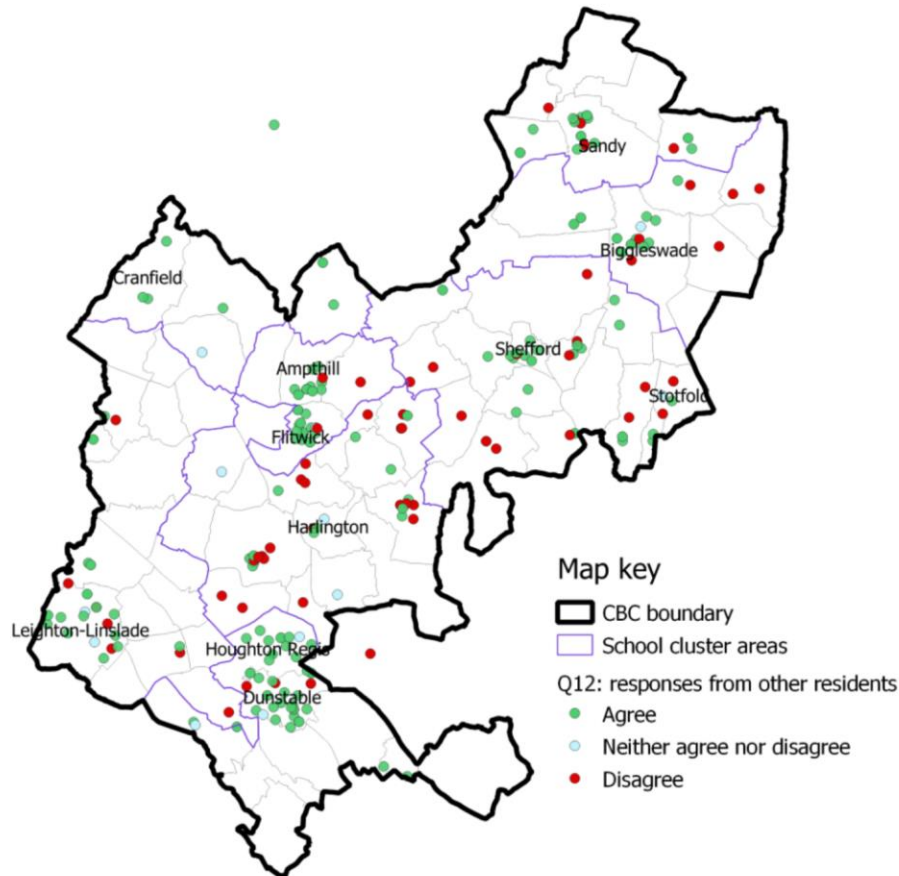
### Home to School transport: Q12 - parents not accessing transport



© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

The map below illustrates the location of responses from **Other residents relating to the overall proposal to remove transport to catchment schools and levels of agreement and disagreement**

**Home to School transport: Q12 - other residents**

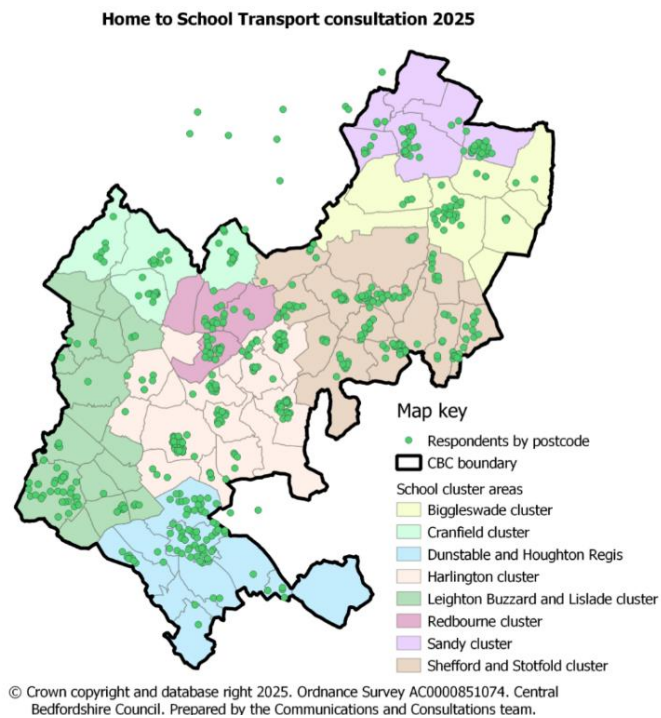


© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

Responses by School Cluster areas:

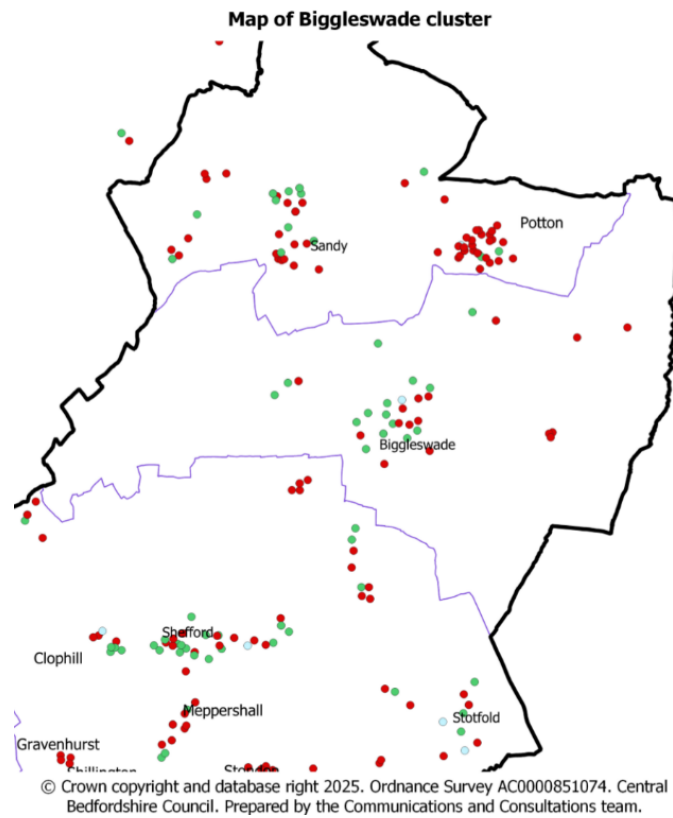
Below is a map showing the School Cluster areas for Central Bedfordshire and plotting responses to the consultation by postcode. This demonstrates that responses to the consultation were received from across all school clusters.

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



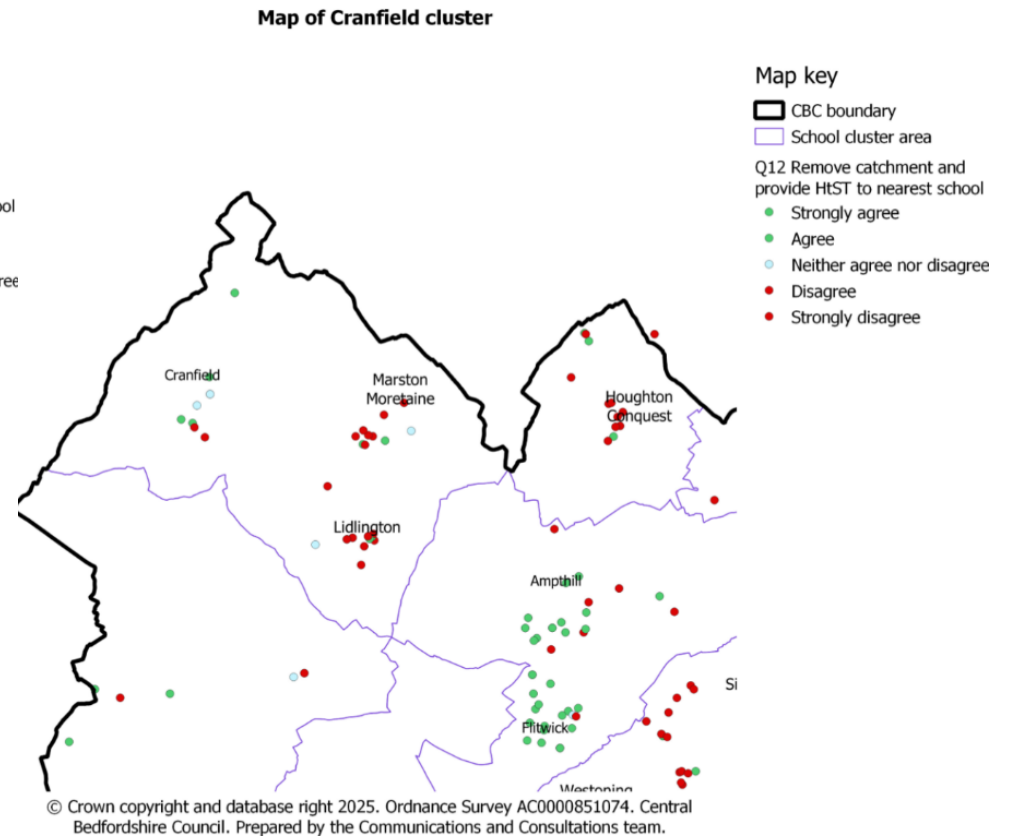
. On the following pages the maps show the location of responses within the school clusters relating to the overall proposal to remove transport to catchment schools and levels of agreement and disagreement

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



**Map key**

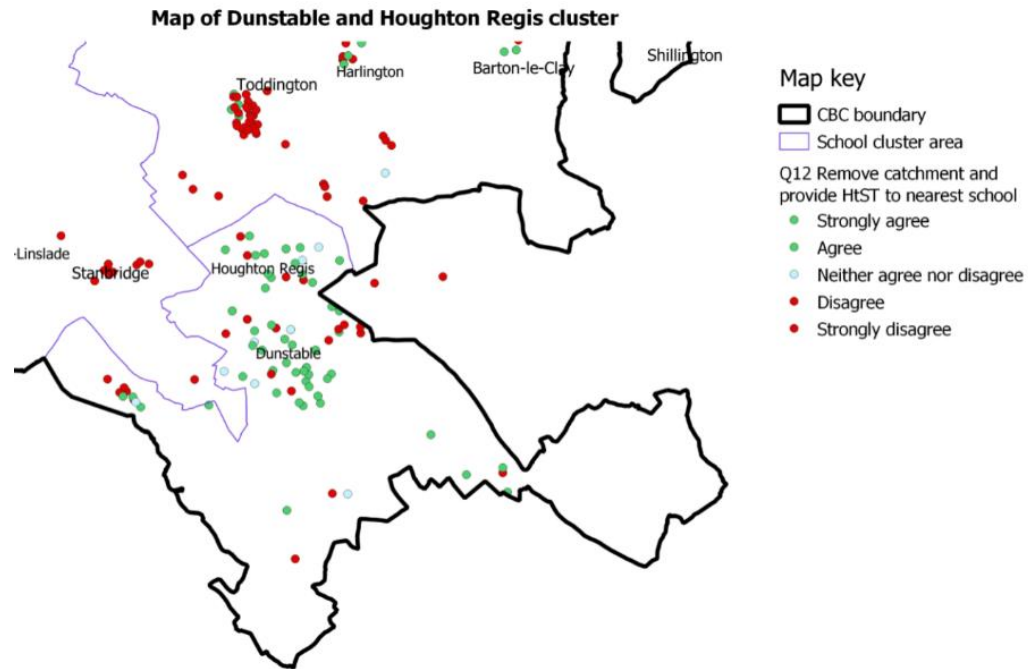
- ▬ CBC boundary
- ▭ School cluster area
- Q12 Remove catchment and provide HST to nearest school
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



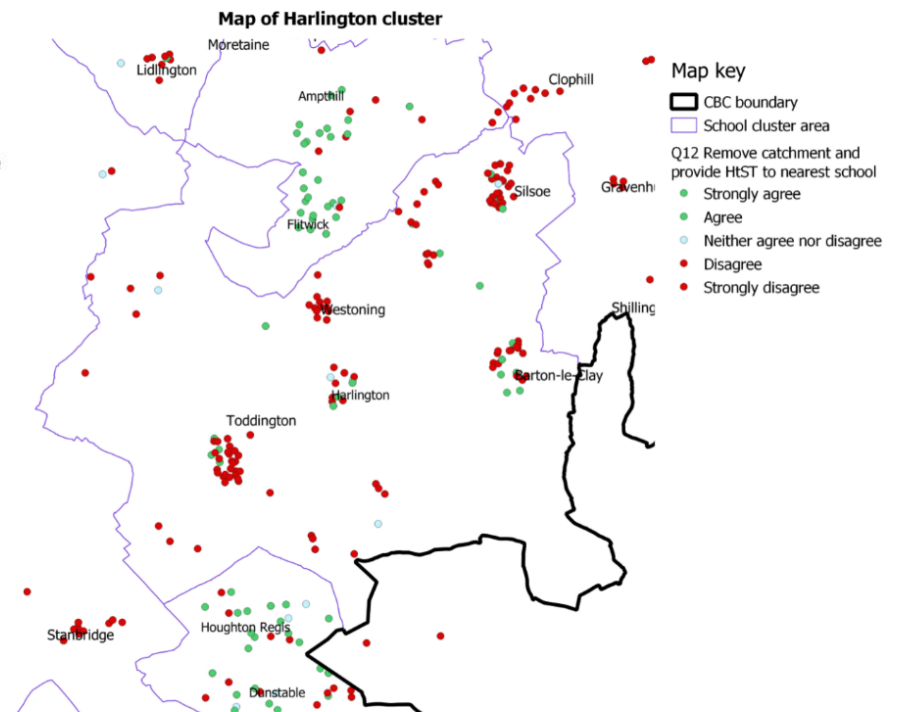
**Map key**

- ▬ CBC boundary
- ▭ School cluster area
- Q12 Remove catchment and provide HST to nearest school
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



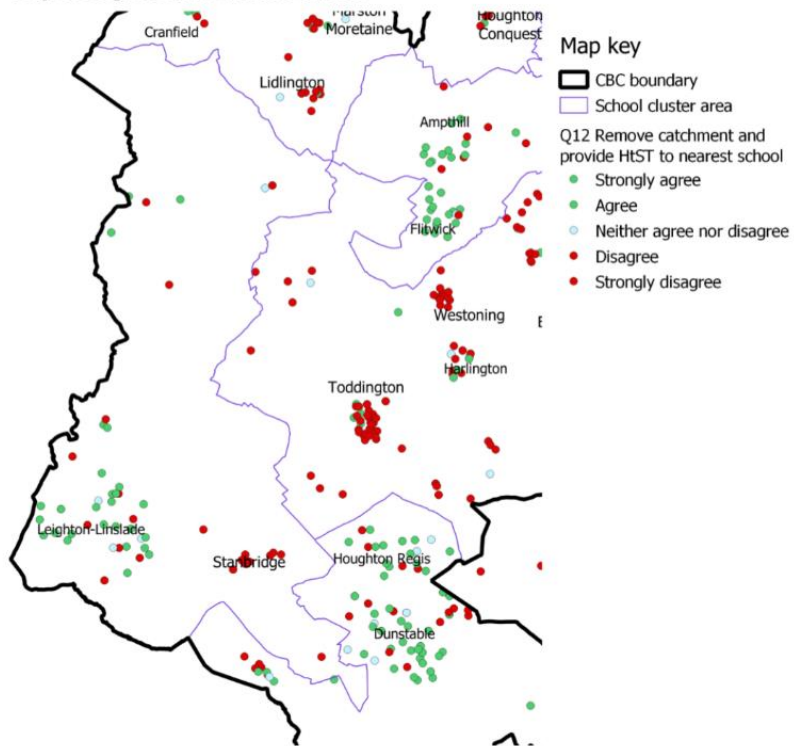
© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.



© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

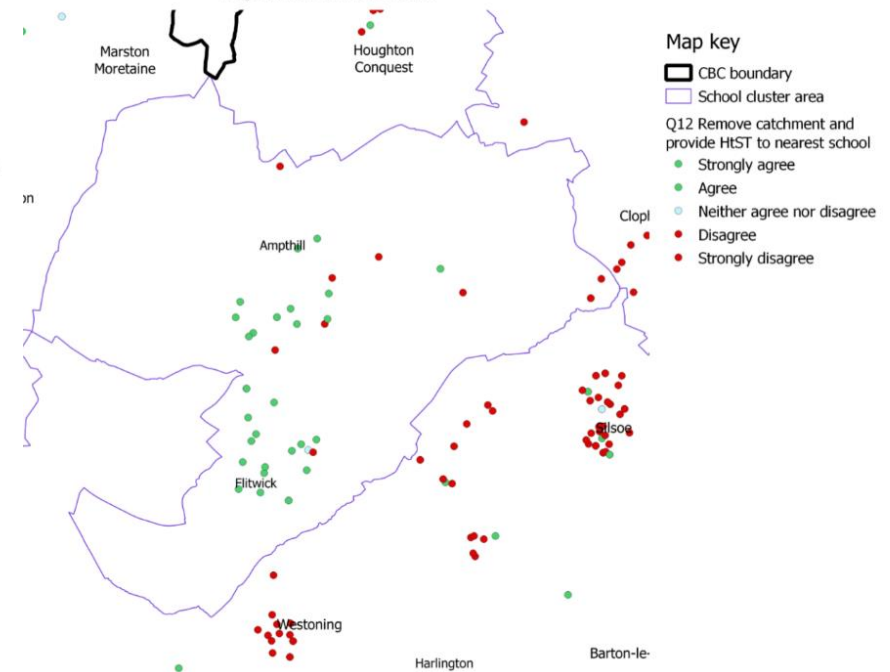
## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Map of Leighton and Linslade cluster**



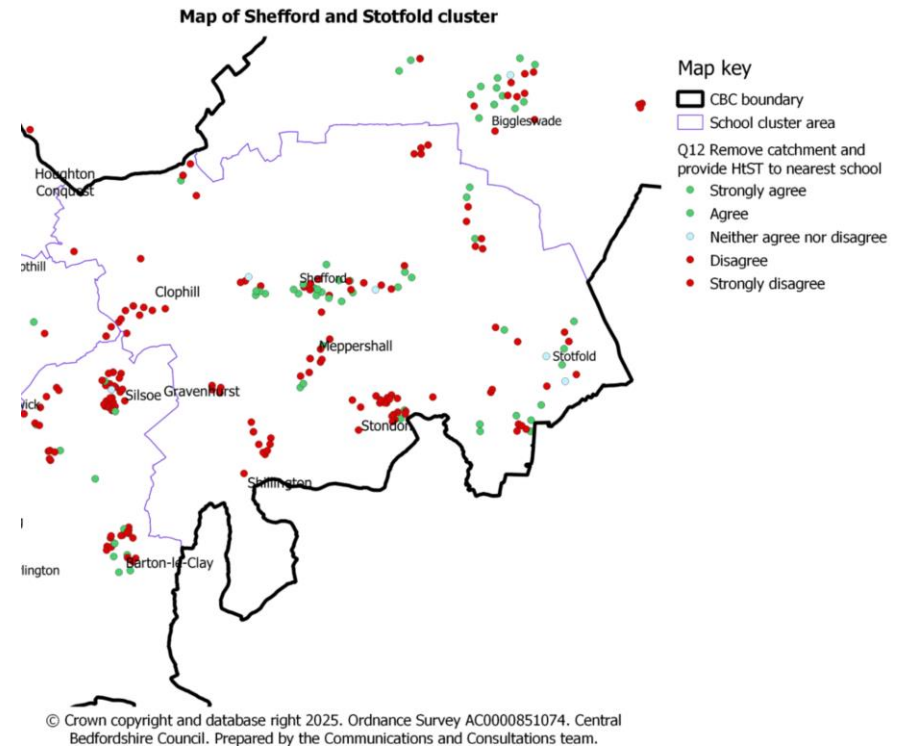
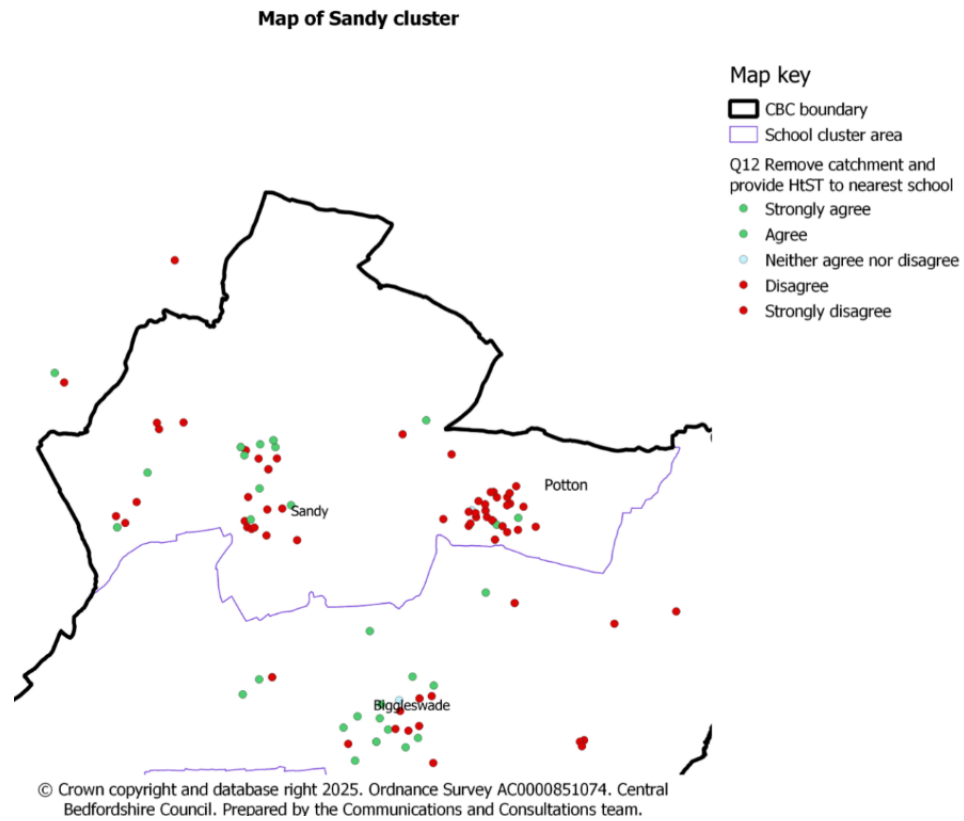
© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

**Map of Redborne cluster**



© Crown copyright and database right 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000851074. Central Bedfordshire Council. Prepared by the Communications and Consultations team.

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



### Q13. Do you have any comments on the proposed change to nearest school?

Of the 796 respondents to the consultation, **528** chose to comment on this question. The main themes have been listed below. Please note that within the themes totals there were also comments from Schools, these comments can be found in the Schools analysis section towards the end of the report.

Theme	No. of comments
School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	79
Lack of/right of choice	76
Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	72
Don't do it/re think proposal	62
Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	60
Supportive comment	59
Costs to parents who can't afford transport	50
Consider the impact of children in villages	48
Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	43
Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	36
Will be increasing carbon footprint	33
3 to 2 tier comment	32
If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay	29
Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments	25
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc)	24

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Theme	No. of comments
Separates friends	22
Won't save money	21
Will save money	20
Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round	19
Evaluate cases/one size doesn't fit all	15
More info needed	15
Find savings elsewhere	13
Need cycle lanes/pathways	12
Should be a choice between at least 2 nearest schools	6
This would be in line with neighbouring LA's	5

### Other comments:

- Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change (4)
- Wasting money that could be used elsewhere in school provision (4)
- More traffic fumes, from cars (3)
- Reassess catchment areas (3)
- Reduces emissions/carbon footprint (3)
- Doesn't make clearer (2)
- Less traffic around schools (2)
- Review SEND transport (2)
- Build more schools (1)
- Cycling to school should only be competent 11+ age (1)
- Distance is as crow flies (1)
- Free transport should only be for SEND or low income (1)
- Inconvenience/disruptive (1)
- Look at questions for people move to areas specifically because of school catchment (1)
- Look at reducing CBC staff (1)
- Look for nearest school not suitable (1)
- Makes it clearer (1)
- savings reduce CT? (1)
- Transport should be free (1)

We have provided an additional breakdown table to show these themes by how respondents commented in theme size order, this has been undertaken in order to understand how views and themes may differ across different resident groups. Detailed in the table are the findings for Question 13: What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be?

The analysis is for all themes above 5 comments



## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	55	Lack of/right of choice	11	Supportive comment	35
school funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	53	Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	11	if parents want to send their child to a school that is not the nearest they should have to pay	18
Don't do it/re think proposal	42	Supportive comment	11	lack of/right of choice	14
Lack of/right of choice	39	Don't do it/re think proposal	10	Will save money	14
Consider the impact of children in villages	36	school funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	7	school funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	12

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	36	Costs to parents who can't afford transport	7	think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	10
Costs to parents who can't afford transport	31	will be increasing carbon footprint	7	will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	10
lack of choice damaging to a childs learning and wellbeing	29	Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school	6	costs to parents who can't afford transport	9
Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	27	Won't save money	5	don't do it/re think proposal	7
Will be increasing carbon footprint	23	lack of choice damaging to a childs learning and wellbeing	5	3 to 2 tier comment	5

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Feeder School/ Pyramid Trust comments	19			Will be difficult if siblings at different schools	5
3 to 2 tier comment	18				
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport	16				
Separates friends	16				
Supportive comment	13				
Won't save money	12				

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round	12				
More info needed	11				
Evaluate cases/one size doesn't fit all	10				
Need cycle lanes/pathways	7				
Find savings elsewhere	6				
if parents want to send their child to a school that is not the nearest they should have to pay	5				

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Some examples of the comments for Question 13, broken down into the main themes by stakeholder, can be found in Appendix ii: at the back of this report**

## Q14. Suggestions on cost saving measures to consider

Q14. As a Council we have been looking at a range of measures to reduce costs across the Council including measures on school transport such as optimising routes, selling available seats, improving available walking routes and starting to introduce Independent Travel Training.

Are there any other cost saving measures that you think should be considered?

Of the 796 respondents to the consultation, **388** chose to comment on this question. The main themes have been listed below. Please note that within the themes totals there were also comments from Schools, these comments can be found in the Schools analysis section towards the end of the report.

Theme	No. of comments
Council efficiencies/stop wasting money	45
More safer walking/cycle routes	43
Evaluate usage, no 1 child in bus/taxi - optimisation	37
Look at saving through less staff at CBC	24
Encourage active travel, cycling/walking to school	19
Look at other ways to get funding	14
Parents should pay for transport to chosen school if not the nearest	13
Sell seats on the bus	12
Funded car pooling	11
Sort 3 to 2 tier system	11
Partial funding	10
Electric buses	9
Look at sorting out SEND provision to find savings	8
Should get free transport to catchment	8
Leave as is/ don't do it	7

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Theme	No. of comments
Smaller vehicles	6
Cut/stop cllr allowances	6
Scrap all funded school transport	6
School/CBC having their own buses	6
Raise taxes	5
Consult all schools and academies	4
Anything other than disrupting childrens education	4

### Other comments:

- Change areas to be nearest school (3)
- Discounted public transport (3)
- Supportive (3)
- 3 miles for a child to walk is too far (2)
- Bigger buses (2)
- Build more schools (2)
- Housing developers should fund safe routes (2)
- Listen to what was said the first time you consulted (2)
- More govt funding (2)
- Reduce CBC pensions (2)
- Stop CBC chiefs bonuses (2)
- Taking buses away will increase parents cars on road (2)
- Tiered pricing (2)
- Young persons bus card (2)
- 20 mph zones (1)
- Better promotion (1)
- CBC should not pay transport costs ffor pupils removed from school (1)
- Centralised sixth form college for CB (1)
- Clear communications to parents on costings (1)
- Designated school pick up/drop off areas (1)
- Ensure enough school places (1)
- Keep a sibling rule (1)
- Lack of choice damaging to a childs learning and wellbeing (1)
- Make to nearest 2 schools (1)
- More info needed (1)

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- More buses (1)
- Put savings into more wraparound clubs for early/late drop offs (1)
- Reconsider siblings (1)
- Reduced service (1)
- Set distance for school transport (1)
- Split Clophill into two sets of nearest school (1)
- Use cameras to enforce car fines (1)
- Work better with neighbouring LA's (1)

We have provided an additional breakdown table to show these themes by how respondents commented in theme size order, this has been undertaken in order to understand how views and themes may differ across different resident groups. Detailed in the table are the findings for Question 14: What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be?

The analysis is for all themes above 5 comments

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
Council efficiencies/stop wasting money	21	efficiency evaluate usage, no 1 person in bus/taxi/optimization	11	more safer walking/cycle routes	13
efficiency evaluate usage, no 1 person in bus/taxi/optimization	19	Council efficiencies/stop wasting money	9	encourage active travel.cycling walking to school	12
more safer walking/cycle routes	17	more safer walking/cycle routes	8	Council efficiencies/stop wasting money	12
look at saving through less staff at CBC	14	look at saving through less staff at CBC	5	parents should pay for transport to chosen school if not the nearest	9
look at other ways to get funding	12			funded car pooling	8

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND Themes	No. of comments	Parent/Carers not accessing HTST Themes	No. of comments	Other resident Themes	No. of comments
partial funding	9			efficiency evaluate usage, no 1 person in bus/taxi/optimisation	6
sort 3 to 2 tier system	7			look at saving through less staff at CBC	5
should get free transport to catchment	6			sell seats on the bus	5
school/CBC having their own buses	5				

**Some examples of the comments for Question 14, broken down into the main themes by stakeholder, can be found in Appendix iii: at the back of this report**

## **E-mail submitted letters**

In addition to the comments received within the questionnaire itself we also received 35 written letters/emails. The correspondence received was analysed and the main themes can be found below. The comments received reiterated what had been heard from the responses within the questionnaire.

- **Don't do it** 18 comments received
- **School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers** 15 comments received
- **Consider the impact of children in villages-** 11 comments received
- **Costs to parents who can't afford transport** 11 comments received
- **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing** 11 comments received
- **Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road** 10 comments received
- **Can't see that it will save money** 9 comments received
- **Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments** 9 comments received
- **Separates friends** 9 comments received
- **Lack of/right of choice** 8 comments received
- **Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school** 7 comments received
- **3 to 2 tier** comment 7 comments received
- **Will be difficult if siblings at different schools** 7 comments received
- **Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round** 7 comments received
- **Do it** 6 comments received
- **Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport** 5 comments received
- **Splits villages** 4 comments received
- **If parents want to send school to somewhere not nearest they should have to pay** 4 comments received
- **Will save money** 4 comments received
- **Will be increasing carbon footprint** 3 comments received

## Schools analysis

There are 123 schools in Central Bedfordshire. All schools were invited to take part in the consultation and 29 responses were received within the online questionnaire from 12 schools.

The following schools were represented in the online questionnaire responses.

- Sandy Secondary School (15)
- Harlington Upper School (2)\* (member of Pyramid Schools Trust)
- Robert Bloomfield Academy Shefford (Middle)(2)\* (member of Bedfordshire Schools Trust)
- Arnold Academy Barton Le Clay (Middle) (1)\* (member of Pyramid Schools Trust)
- Holywell School Cranfield (Middle) (1)
- Houghton Conquest Lower School (1)
- Marston Moreteyne VC School (Lower)(1)
- Parkfields Middle School - Toddington(1)\* (member of Pyramid Schools Trust)
- Redborne Upper School – Ampthill (1)
- Samuel Whitbread Academy Clifton (Upper) (1)\* (member of Bedfordshire Schools Trust)
- Stratton School Biggleswade (Secondary) (1)
- Westoning Lower School (1)\*( member of Pyramid Schools Trust)

We received 4 responses from schools via written letters.

These were received from:

- **Pyramid Schools Trust** representing 9 schools (*Harlington Upper\**, *Arnold Academy\**, *Parkfields Middle\**, Brooklands Middle, Beecroft Academy, Ramsey Manor Lower, *Westoning Lower\**, Sundon Lower, Harlington Lower Schools)
- **Sandy Secondary School** \*x2
- **Harlington Lower School** and **Sundon Lower School** (member of Pyramids Schools Trust)
- **Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)** representing 10 schools (*Samuel Whitbread Academy\** (SWA), Etonbury Academy, Pix Brook Academy, *Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA)\**, Langford Village Academy (LVA), Lawnside Academy, St Christophers Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Campton Academy, and Gravenhurst Academy)

*\*these schools also submitted online questionnaire responses.*

## Online questionnaire response analysis

Of the school representatives who completed the online questionnaire:

96% (27) disagreed with the overall proposal to remove transport to catchment schools (28 responded to this question)

82% (24) disagreed with the need for the policy to align with the DFE (29 responded to this question)

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

80% (23) disagreed will deliver sustainable, reduce emissions, lower carbon footprint (29 responded to this question)

79% (23) disagreed with the need to align with admission policies of other schools (29 responded to this question)

79% (23) disagreed that it would promote fairness (29 responded to this question)

76% (22) disagreed that the change makes the policy easier to understand (29 responded to this question)

71% (20) disagreed with the need to align with other LA's (29 responded to this question)

66% (19) disagreed with the need to reduce costs (29 responded to this question)

## Comments analysis

We have also provided a breakdown for the themes received from schools within the online questionnaire.

Q4. The following themes were highlighted by the school representatives, in the online questionnaire.

Themes	No. of comments
Lack of/right of choice	14
Costs to parents who can't afford transport	10
Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing	9
School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	8
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport(parents work commitments etc)	4
Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments	4
3 to 2 tier comment	4
Don't do it	4

Some examples of the comments have been included below:

### **Lack of/right of choice 14 comments**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Pupils will have zero choice on what school they can attend, which will negatively affect disadvantaged pupils, as they won't be able to get to their school of choice"*

*"Student and parent choice will be reduced. Students might be forced to attend a school they are not happy with due to transport restrictions."*

*"I believe this will have a hugely detrimental impact on parental and student choice when looking to decide on the most suitable school placement for their child. Currently, the school has a large number of students who chose to attend, and who would fall outside of this revised school catchment area."*

### **Costs to parents who can't afford transport 10 comments**

*"I believe that this change would cause a lot of challenges for schools, students and families. The new proposal would affect the way students consider their school choices and mean they may not be attending schools that are appropriate for them due to their needs and or wellbeing."*

*"This limits genuine parental choice and places an unfair financial burden on those who cannot afford private transport, particularly low-income and Pupil Premium families."*

*"Families being impacted financially during a time when lots of families are already struggling to cover the rising cost of living;"*

### **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing 9 comments**

*"Mental health impact on children who can not attend the same school as their peers due to that not being the closest school to them"*

*"It will affect the school and certain students in a negative way."*

*"The impact could lead to longer commutes for some families, pressure on transport on the roads, pressures on families with regards to transport and limiting options, which could lead to additional apathy from students"*

### **School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers 8 comments**

*"This will affect Sandy Secondary School pupil numbers as currently we have a large student body from Potton. These students thrive at Sandy Secondary School. The school has had considerable investment to enable a PAN of 240 students per year. If this goes ahead the school will face a very significant financial shortfall resulting in redundancies."*

*"Students from the villages around Redborne, which are catchment for Harlington, will now seek places at Redborne, an already over subscribed school. This will increase admissions to Redborne and decrease the admissions to Harlington. These children will be given a place at Harlington but will now be expected to pay for transport. How is that fair."*

*"It will fundamentally weaken our proposition."*

### **Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport(parents work commitments etc) 4 comments**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Catchment area's changing will effect school transport meaning students will have to use private hire transport putting some at a massive disadvantage"*

*"This proposed change and policy is counter-productive in terms of establishing Holywell as a 6FE secondary as half that population is not eligible for transport and therefore not applying. It also limits parental choice and does not promote equality or equity - only the wealthy who can afford their own transport will be able to attend the school of their choice."*

### **Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments 4 comments**

*"It will fundamentally weaken our proposition. Within the Pyramid Schools Trust we are working to mitigate the awful key stage results of CBC by strengthening the school transitions in the 3 tier system. With large scale building in the area the nearest schools are likely to be oversubscribed, so much of the savings in 2031-2 will be illusory"*

### **3 to 2 tier comment 4 comments**

*"On our school limited but we are concerned that there could be significant impact on the onward journey as we move from a 3 to 2 tier structure. What would the impact be on the viability of both Holywell and Wootton Secondary Schools?"*

*"Significant – particularly for students within the 3 tier system or those forced to be in the 2 tier system at middle school age due to their location. We understand that the policy makes provision for students currently within the 3 tier system (ie Robert Bloomfield students) to have transport provided to their closest upper school as this would be regarded as an LA placement. However, this fails to consider those students that have no choice to enter a middle school (eg Pixbrook) that also has secondary provision."*

### **Don't do it 4 comments**

*"Disruption to my child's school journey and transport, please do not change current arrangements."*

*"at this time, we strongly object to these changes as written to the policy and would request that this change is held until all schools in the authority has moved to the 2 tier model."*

### **Will result in more cars/buses on the road 3 comments**

*"Traffic congestion around schools will be made worse if parents have to bring children to school, resulting in lower air quality, longer journey times, and more journeys - use of school buses reduces environmental impact."*

### **Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change 2 comments**

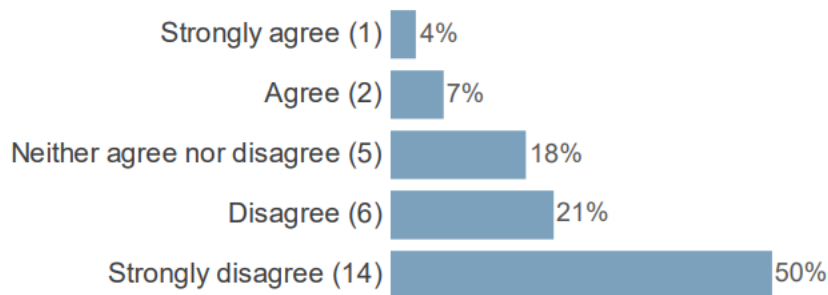
*"The impact could lead to longer commutes for some families, pressure on transport on the roads, pressures on families with regards to transport and limiting options, which could lead to additional apathy from students"*

## **Quantitative questionnaire analysis by question**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

The following graphs show how schools responded to the questions within the Home to School Transport Consultation online questionnaire.

### Q5. To Align with most councils and our neighbouring local authorities

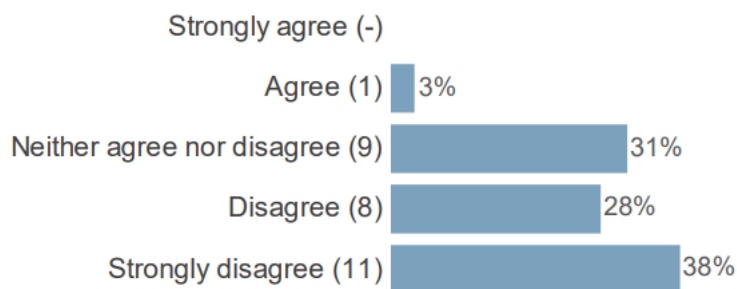


(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 71% (20) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 11% (3) agreed with the proposal. 18% (5) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

### Q6. To reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport



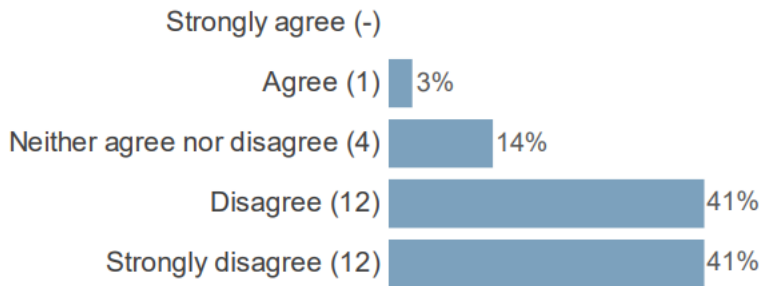
(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 66% (19) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 3% (1) agreed with the proposal. 31% (9) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

### Q7. To align with the Department for Education statutory guidance

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

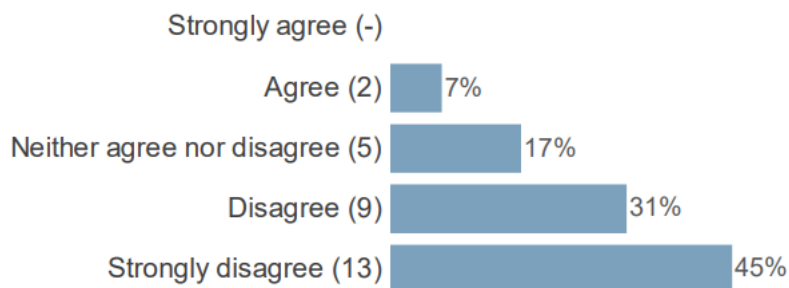


(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 82% (24) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 3% (1) agreed with the proposal. 14% (4) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

### Q8. To make the policy clearer



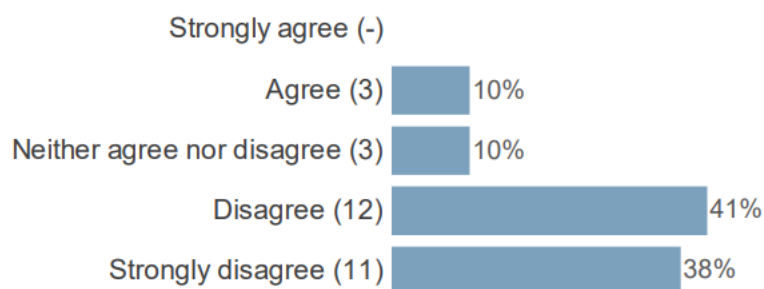
(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 76% (22) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 7% (2) agreed with the proposal. 17% (5) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

### Q9. Align with some schools in Central Bedfordshire already to nearest school

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

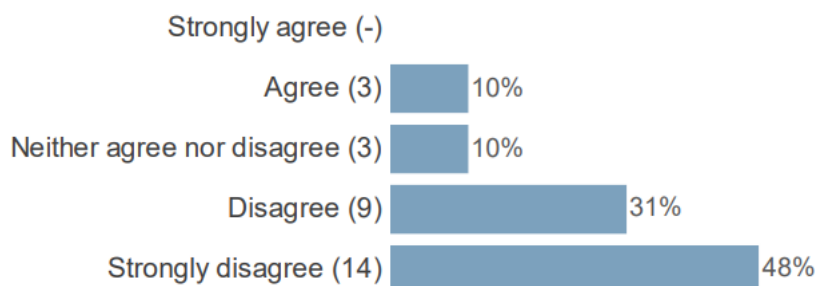


(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 79% (23) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 10% (3) agreed with the proposal. 10% (3) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

## Q10. To promote fairness amongst those wishing to access school transport across Central Bedfordshire



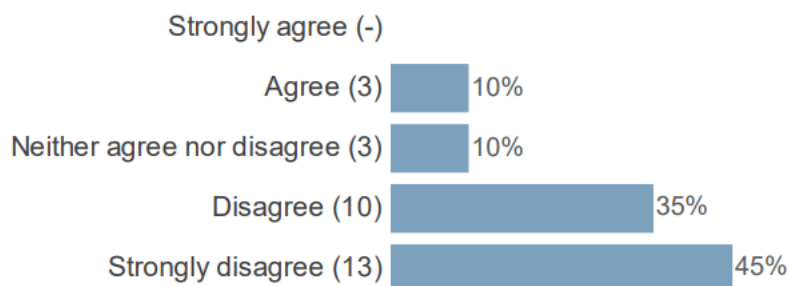
(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 79% (23) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 10% (3) agreed with the proposal. 10% (3) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

## Q11. Additional benefits

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

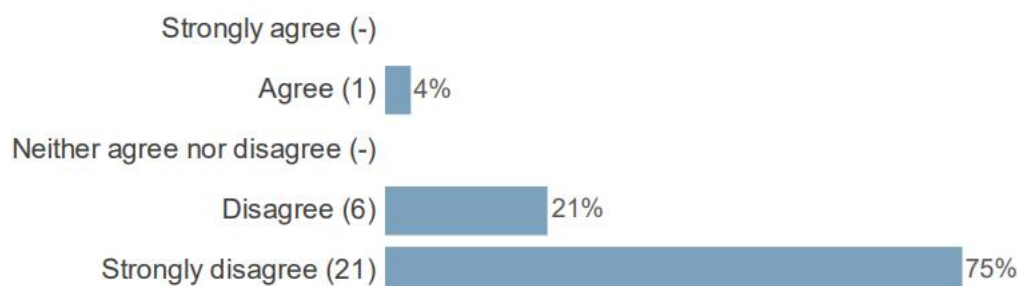


(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school)

The above graph shows that 80% (23) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 10% (3) agreed with the proposal. 10% (3) neither agreed nor disagreed.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

### Q12. How the schools responded to the overall question



(caveat: \*we received 15 responses from school representatives of one school, however due to the responses from the other school representatives this has not changed the sentiment of the responses)

The above graph shows that 96% (27) of the school representatives\* did not support the proposal. 4% (1) agreed with the proposal.

There are 123 state funded academies and schools in Central Bedfordshire, 29 responses were received from schools via the online questionnaire (15 of which were from the same school)

Q13. The following themes were highlighted from the open comments received via the online questionnaire from the school representatives, for Question 13.

Themes	No. of comments
Lack of/right of choice	8
School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers	6
Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport(parents work commitments etc)	4
Don't do it	3
Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road	3
Costs to parents who can't afford transport	2
Feeder/Pyramid Trust comments	2

Some examples of the comments have been included below:

**Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing 8 comments**

*"Parents and children lose the right to choose which school they attend"*

*"Students have one chance at Education and my view is that parents should be able to have their school of choice and not be forced into a school due to transport."*

*"This completely removes any choice from those children who rely on transport."*

**School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers 6 comments**

*"Local schools are already over-subscribed."*

*"Catchment areas have been set to distribute the students across all schools. Parents can already opt for their nearest school. Some already do this but others do not as they will have to pay for transport. This will result in some schools being over subscribed and others low on numbers. There will be confusion for pupils applying for secondary as they know they should be offered a place at their catchment school, however they may not be offered a place at their nearest school."*

**Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport(parents work commitments etc) 4 comments**

*"Under these proposals, parents, guardians and children will have limited choice, especially if they cannot afford to send their child to a school which is not their nearest available option."*

**Don't do it 3 comments**

*"Please do not cause disruption by changing the current system, it's unfair on families who will be forced to take their children to underperforming schools."*

**Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road 3 comments**

*"The sustainability aspect is not supported by this change as parents who are able to afford their own transport to their chosen and/or catchment school, will increase the number of vehicles moving between locations and will increase transport issues."*

**Costs to parents who can't afford transport 2 comments**

*"Under these proposals, parents, guardians and children will have limited choice, especially if they cannot afford to send their child to a school which is not their nearest available option."*

**Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments 2 comments**

*"The educational journey of each pupil is essential, particularly in maintaining the strong relationships already established with existing feeder schools. While there may be a financial benefit to omit 'catchment schools', I believe this approach is unfair to those schools that have invested in building secure partnerships and developing a curriculum that supports the continuity and progression of our children's education."*

Q14. The following themes were highlighted from the open comments received via the online questionnaire from the school representatives for Question 14.

The comments have been included below:

**Council efficiencies/stop wasting money 2 comments**

*"Reconsider the distribution of council funds"*

*"I am sure that there could be some savings sitting within a wider schools strategy."*

*"Consider the distribution of financial resources so fairness is ensured"*

**More safer walking/cycle routes 2 comments**

*"Unless you can improve road safety and paths, as well as crossings, this proposal is in danger of putting life's at risk not reducing costs."*

*"Cycling schemes - lots of our pupils would cycle if there were safer cycle paths and a way for parents to afford a bicycle."*

**Sort 3 to 2 tier system 1 comment**

*"A sensible long term strategy. Moving to two tier education."*

**More fuel efficient buses 1 comment**

*"improved efficiency and fuel consumption of buses"*

**Suggestion for transport network 1 comment**

*"One example could be the introduction of a centralised, route based, transport network, following a 'tube map' concept where routes were colour coded and accessible to students, again like the tube, to travel on. Divided by locality and used by multiple school users as we still have a split economy of middle and upper schools, working in the same geographical area as new secondaries."*

**Developing Partnerships with local schools 1 comment**

*"While I appreciate the Council's efforts to explore a range of cost-saving measures, I would encourage further consideration of the following developing partnerships with local schools to work more closely them and their feeder school to coordinate transport arrangements, share resources. This can reduce unnecessary duplication and ensure that transport solutions align with established educational relationships and catchment areas."*

**Priority for Central Bedfordshire students to get to Central Bedfordshire schools 1 comment**

*"In our particular case, the policy does not reduce costs as transport still has to be provided ... but to a Bedford Borough school. At least if there are costs to be met, surely there must be a way to ensure CBC students have priority to get transport to a CBC school."*

**Can't see the cost saving/benefit of this proposal 1 comment**

*"For Potton children, they are going to have to have a bus regardless to get them to their nearest secondary school so this in my view is pointless, you are just going to create financial problems elsewhere for what I can see has no benefit"*

**Suggestion for designated locations at a 2/3 walking mile radius to the schools 1 comment**

*"Could designated locations common to a 2/3 miles walking radius be chosen for each school's transport link? A bus stop so to speak to reduce waiting time."*

**"Uniform prices" 1 comment**

We received 4 responses from schools via written letters.

These were received from:

- **Pyramid Schools Trust** representing 9 schools (*Harlington Upper\**, *Arnold Academy\**, *Parkfields Middle\**, Brooklands Middle, Beecroft Academy, Ramsey Manor Lower, *Westoning Lower\**, Sundon Lower, Harlington Lower Schools)
- **Sandy Secondary School** \*x2
- **Harlington Lower School** and **Sundon Lower School** (member of Pyramids Schools Trust)

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

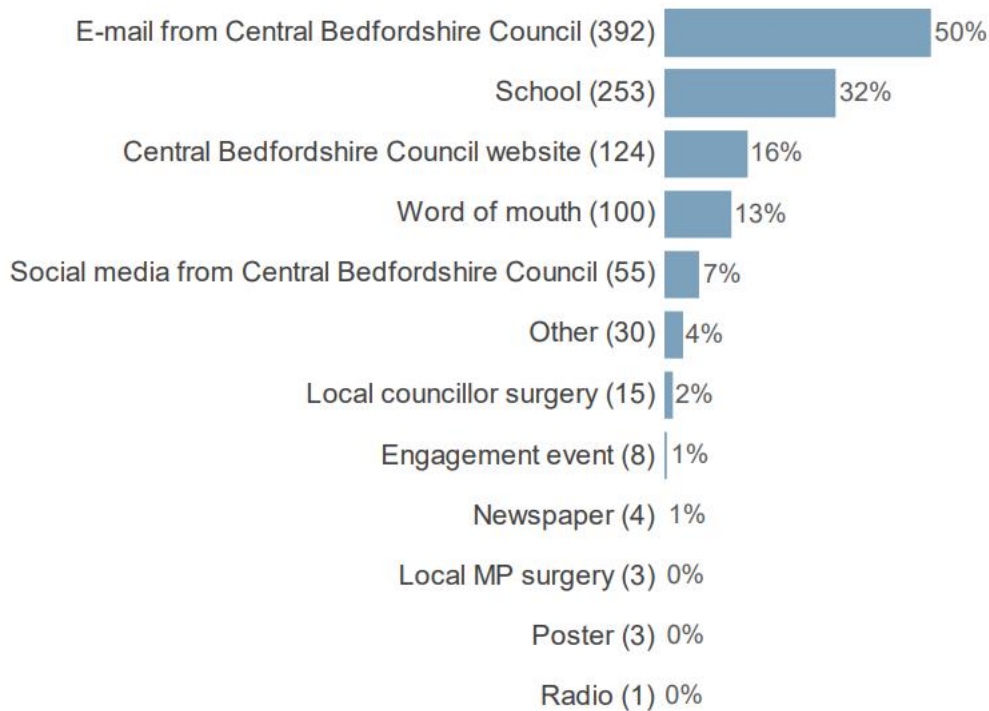
- **Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)** representing 10 schools (*Samuel Whitbread Academy\** (SWA), Etonbury Academy, Pix Brook Academy, *Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA)\**, Langford Village Academy (LVA), Lawnside Academy, St Christophers Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Campton Academy, and Gravenhurst Academy)

*\*these schools also submitted online questionnaire responses.*

These responses are included in full in Appendix iv:

## Demographics

How did you hear about this consultation?



The above graph shows how respondents heard about the consultation: E-mail from Central Bedfordshire Council 50% (392), School 32% (253), Central Bedfordshire Council website 16% (124), Word of mouth 13% (100), Social media from Central Bedfordshire Council 7% (55), Other 4% (30), Local councillor surgery 2% (15), Engagement event 1% (8), Newspaper 1% (4), Local MP surgery (3), Poster (3), Radio (1)

If other, please tell us:

Social media local group (6), Social Media from Local Councillor not Central Bedfordshire Council account (3), Social media (2), Facebook (2), Parents (2), Family member (1), Letter from school (1), Parish Council (1), Local councillor (1), Public community engagement event with cbc officers, community safety/beds police, councillor event (1), Email (1), Read Executive papers (1)

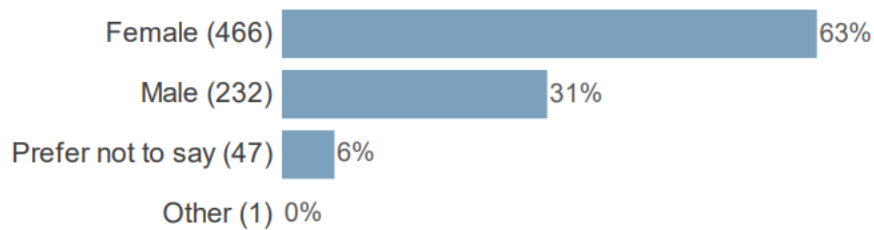
If social media, please tell us which one:

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



The above graph shows that the social media respondents that had heard about the consultation through was Facebook 98% (50), Other social media 2% (1)

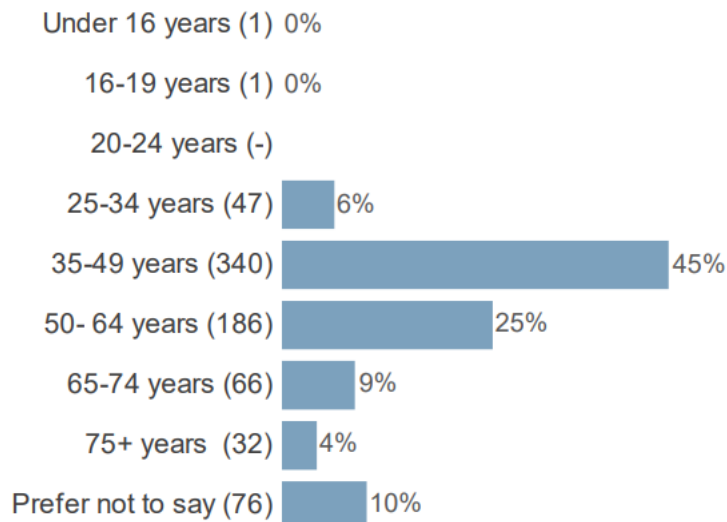
Are you: (please select one)



The above graph shows that 746 respondents answered this question, they were Female 63% (466), Male 31% (232). 6% (47) Preferred not to say. 1 respondent said Other. Males were under-represented compared to the Central Bedfordshire population (51% female and 49% male).

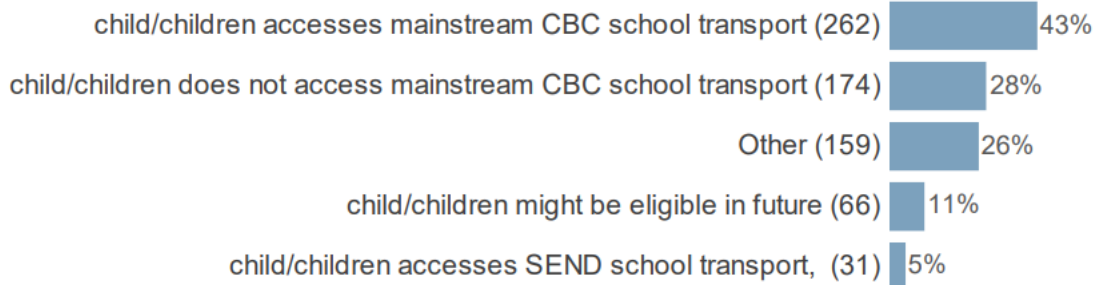
What is your age? (please select one)

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



The above graph shows, of the 749 who answered this question, the age of the respondents was 35-49 45% (340), 50-64 25% (186), 10% (76) Preferred not to say, 65-74 9% (66), 25-34 6% (47), 75+ 4% (32), 16-19 (1), Under 16 (1).

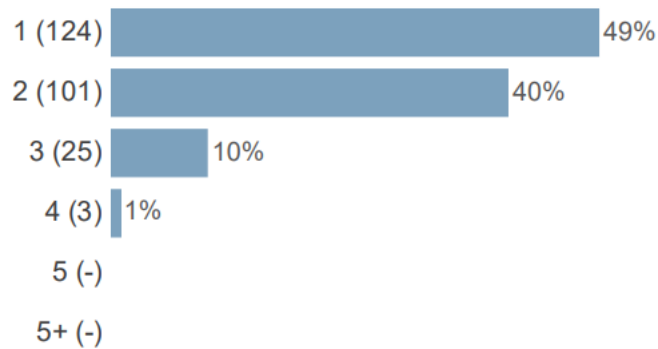
Please only answer this next question if you are a parent/carer, Which of the below best describes you? (please select all that apply)



If a parent/carer of a child/children of school age who accesses mainstream CBC school transport

How many of your children does this apply to?

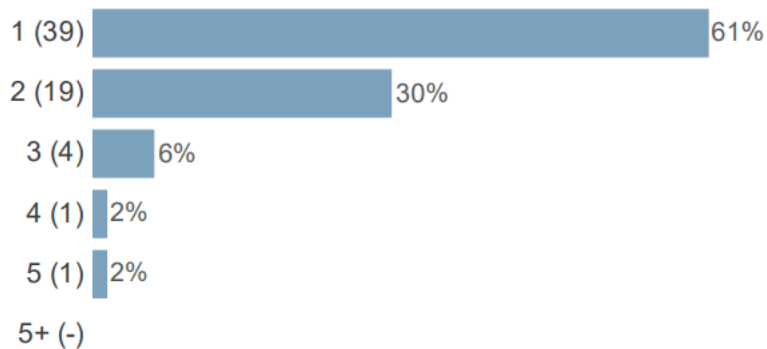
## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



1 child 49% (124), 2 children 40% (101), 3 children 10% (25), 4 children 1% (3)

If a parent/carers of a child/children who is not yet of school age who might be eligible for mainstream CBC school transport

How many of your children does this apply to?



1 child 61% (39), 2 children 30% (19), 3 children 6% (4), 4 children 2% (1), 5 children 2% (1)

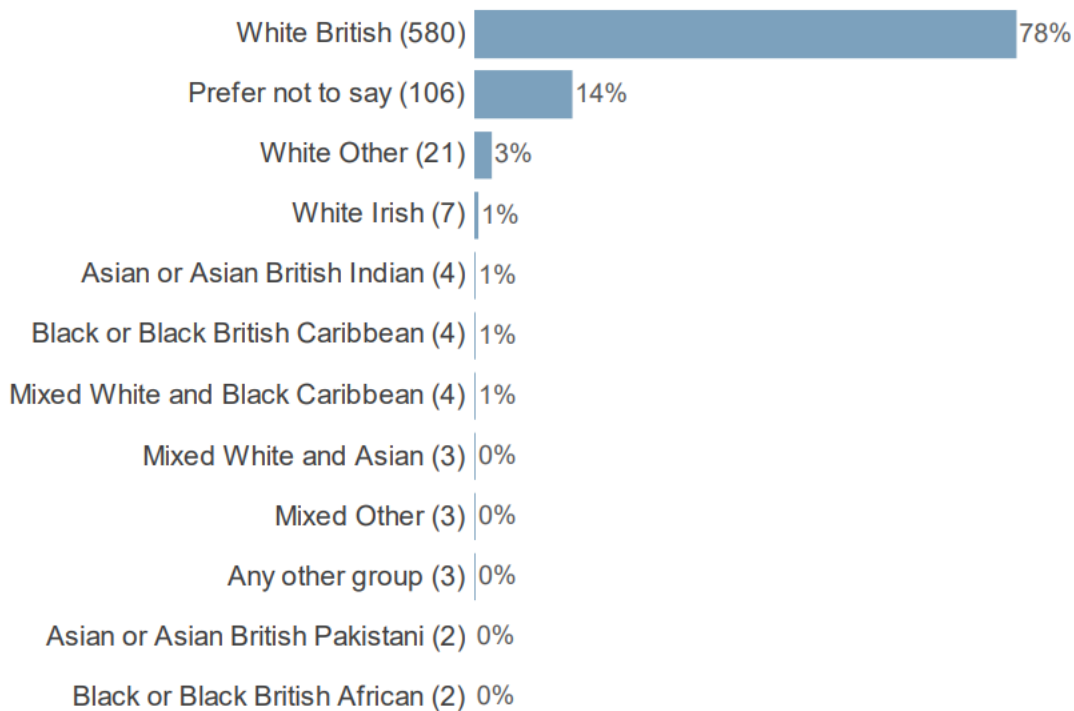
Do you consider yourself disabled? (please select one)

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.



The above graph shows that of the 744 who answered this question, the respondents who indicated that they had a disability in the consultation was 10% (72), with 81% (602) saying No. This is a low response from those who said that they had a disability versus the average of 15% versus the population of Central Bedfordshire.

To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (please select one)



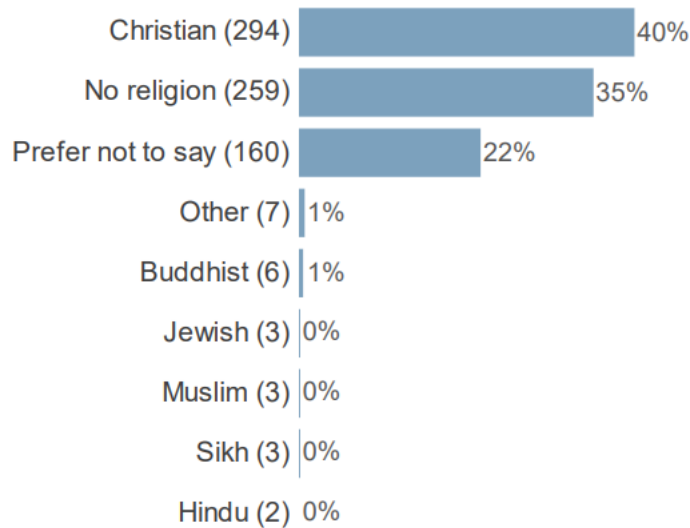
The above graph shows that of the 739 respondents who answered this question, of which groups they considered that they belonged to, they were White British 78% (580), Prefer not to say 14% (106), White Other 3% (21), White Irish 3% (21), Asian or Asian British Indian 1% (4), Black or Black British Caribbean 1% (4), Mixed White and Black Caribbean 1% (4), Mixed White and Asian (3), Mixed Other (3), Any other group (3), Asian or Asian British Pakistani (2), Black or Black British African (2)

If other, please specify:

African (1), Dutch (1), English (1), European (1), Filipino (1), German (1), Irish/Italian & British (1), Italian (1), Native American (1), White English (1), White European (1), White European Mixed (1), White Romanian (1)

What is your religion or belief? (please select one)

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025



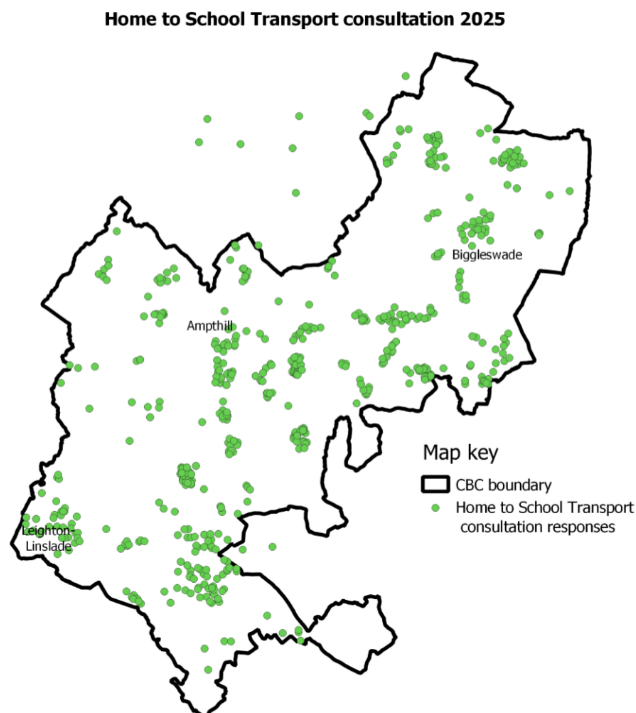
The above graph shows that of the 737 respondents who answered this question, were Christian 40% (294), No religion 35% (259), Prefer not to say 22% (160), Other 1% (7), Buddhist 1% (6), Jewish (3), Muslim (3), Sikh (3), Hindu (2)

If other, please specify:

Brahmin (1), C of E (1), Christian (1), Greek Orthodox (1), Humanist (1), Pagan (1) Zoroastrianism (1)

### Postcode and Acorn analysis

Responses were received from a wide range of households across the whole of Central Bedfordshire.



Affluent groups were over represented in responses, whilst people on a low income were underrepresented in terms of responses.

Affluent ranking (category based)	Central Bedfordshire households (Acorn)	HTST consultation responses
Affluent	19%	36%
Middle	63%	58%
Deprived	17%	6%

(Local calculations based on) © 1996 – 2025 CACI Limited. This report shall be used solely for academic, personal and/ or non-commercial purposes. Contains Royal Mail data © Royal Mail copyright and database right 2016.

## Appendix i: Q.4 comments by stakeholder group

### What do you consider the impact of the proposed change will be?

Some examples of the comments from Question 4 have been included below and broken down into the main themes by stakeholder:

Please note that within this breakdown, the combined comments may not always add up to the total figure given due to this breakdown being for the 3 specific stakeholding groups. If the total differs from the addition of these 3 groups this is due to other respondents outside of these groups also responding with these themes.

**Lack of parental choice:** 166 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 88 comments

*“Less choice of where child goes to school”*

*“This will take away the choice of schools that parents currently have. Students may not get the best education or start in life if the local school is not as good as one they can get transport to.”*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Parents will not be able to send their children to their school of choice within catchment areas. It is a parents right to choose. Many have moved to catchment areas to go to school of choice."*

*"Children and parents losing out on choice."*

*"Less Choice of schools for those living g in rural areas, increasing the divide in offering between urban and rural areas"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 32 comments

*"The changes will not give parents the choice of where to send their child. Whilst the nearest school may be cost effective, it may not be the preferred choice of that parent."*

*"Parents will have less choice of schools."*

*"I think it will have a huge impact on children who do not get into their first choice catchment school"*

*"Less choice of school for parents to consider for their children. Poorer choice and education."*

*"I believe that the proposed change will mean that parents will no longer have a choice of schools to attend, unless they are able to cover the financial burden of sending their child to the school of their choice."*

### **Other resident** 27 comments

*"This will cause problems for families. And reduce parental choice."*

*"There may be an impact on parents that prefers specific schools for their children."*

*"reducing choice of school ensuring only those who can drive their child to school can pick that school."*

*"Students and parents having less of an opportunity to send the child to the school of their choice. Those on transport will have less choice if the catchment of their rural home is changed"*

*"Residents in villages will be unable to get transport to their catchment school, which reduces their educational options."*

## **Costs to parents who can't afford to transport:** 142 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 83 comments

*"Negative. I have a daughter in year 9 who attends Sandy secondary school, via free school bus. I want my other daughter, in year 4 to also attend Sandy secondary via a free school bus. I cannot afford to pay for transport myself"*

*"Single parents like me will have to find over £1000 a year to fund the cost of the school bus."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Costs to struggling families"*

*"A significant cost implication for families already struggling with the cost of living. There is already an attendance crisis in the country, why would the council propose something that will make it more difficult for parents and carers to send their children to school."*

*"Such a disadvantage to low income families."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 25 comments

*"This will have a huge financial impact on all parents!"*

*"The cost of transport will shift from the council to parents with no benefit to the child affected."*

*"You are not thinking about low income families who will be penalised due to the change just to save money."*

*"More expense for parents who are already working full time to pay for the cost of living."*

*"Parents having to send their kids to a school they don't want or be appallingly financially penalised."*

### **Other resident** 20 comments

*"Children being unable to attend their preferred school other than those that can afford private transport"*

*"this will limit the choice of school for less well off parents who can't provide their own transport"*

*"The biggest impact will be on rural communities and particularly for low income families who may either end up paying transport costs for their children to attend school or will have to drive them to school creating greater congestion on roads."*

*"I am concerned that low income families maybe unable to send their children to the best school for them as they will be unable to cover transport costs"*

*"Yet another thing to make working and trying to raise a family more difficult whilst crippling us financially with more expensive council taxes."*

### **Will save money:** 115 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 10 comments

*"A sensible, cost effective approach to school transport"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"I am hoping for a reduction in costs for the council"*

*"Saving money"*

*"Streamlined service cutting waste and saving money."*

*"Cost reduction in providing transport."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing** HTST 29 comments

*"Save CBC some much needed money!"*

*"As a parent who pays well over £1,000 to a private bus company to transport one (soon to be two) of my children to school within Central Bedfordshire, I am dismayed to learn that other parents have been enjoying service this for free."*

*"More budget for the council"*

*"Save money. Now if you as a council use it wisely we should see some benefit."*

*"I hope new proposals will reduce costs"*

### **Other resident** 74 comments

*"A fairer provision with essential cost savings."*

*"Reduction in cost to the council and council tax payers with the parents now potentially having to pay for their children/take their children to school."*

*"Positive, it sounds like it will save money at a time that it's needed"*

*"I consider the impact to be a positive one - specifically on the local authorities spending."*

*"Freeing up council money that could be spent on improving the area that would benefit the whole community."*

### **Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road:** 96 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 53 comments

*"It will cause a lot of additional traffic on the roads as people choose/ Are forced to drive to the school"*

*"For those parents that do choose a catchment school without transport, this policy will ultimately lead to more cars on the road and more congestion and more pollution. Completely undermining the councils final flimsy argument for the change"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"higher volume of traffic on the roads during peak times, drop off and collection from schools, potential hazard to those already walking to and from schools"*

*"This means more parents will drive children to school resulting in awful traffic problems throughout central bedfordshire, which is already busy enough at peak times."*

*"it will save the council money, however it will cost the parents and the environment as people will drive their children putting more traffic on the roads and causing more pollution as well as increasing the risk of accidents with poor parking and dropping off in areas where young children are crossing the road."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 13 comments

*"More cars on the road due to those parents who are forced to take their own child to school via car- instead of the child accessing the bus service as would be the case under the current system."*

*"I think it will be a disaster for our already overloaded roads. It will mean that even more parents will have to take their children to school by car - in a lot of cases the schools were not built in locations that were geared for truly local intake."*

*"Reduce known costs, of providing free school buses but will add more cars to the road as parents drive their children to school therefore increasing pollution and road maintenance costs."*

*"More cars on the road as parents will drive their child to the catchment school. This means more traffic and congestion, to the detriment of others within Central Bedfordshire."*

*"far more car journeys in the area, leading to worse traffic (which is already bad at school drop-off and pick-up times."*

### **Other resident** 23 comments

*"the majority of parents will drive rather than pay a huge amount of money for school transport & this will cause chaos on the roads in the area."*

*"My concern is that buses will be required for children travelling from Westoning to Woodland middle school in Flitwick. If that were to happen, the school entrance on Steppingley Road would need to be reopened. The current entrance is completely impractical and dangerous. Coaches arriving to take children on trips have to reverse and mount the pavement. I see lots of near misses."*

*"could increase the number of cars on the road increasing pollution as a bus full of children will be more efficient than 30 cars"*

*"fewer school buses on the road "good" but on the down side a lot of good work will be undone as parents will take their children by car "bad" I think all schools should have a ban on cars parking outside/near schools and encourage childre to make their own way to school."*

*"More cars on the roads during normal rush hours traffic"*

**School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers:** 93 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 57 comments

*"Less children in our catchment school, which means less funding for the school and in theory bigger classes."*

*"Schools in Leighton Buzzard are oversubscribed so the reality of being offered a place in your nearest school is unlikely."*

*"CBC appear to be attempting to reset the catchment areas and school admissions policy for Trust run schools by removing any option for children to get there."*

*"Children of the Village can not get into their feeder school as it's over subscribed and if we put this school we won't get in and we given a school that is much further away."*

*"The policy does not state what happens if the nearest school is over subscribed."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 13 comments

*"Reduced funding to my daughters school."*

*"This is likely to lead to a reduction in pupils attending our local school which will in turn lead to a lack of funding and therefore a reduction in opportunities for the pupils."*

*"Effectively make having spent £16M on Sandy Secondary School and increasing the PAN a complete waste of time and money."*

*"We seen especially in recent years schools going down. Teachers leaving etc closest school would be an option if they all had outstanding or at least good Ofsted."*

*"Cause some more.remote schools.to be under subscribed"*

**Other resident** 12 comments

*"Financial pressure on families we're children are unable to go to the nearest school for some reason ie oversubscribed"*

*"If the local school is not as good as the catchment area school then the school quality should be looked into.and the reasons why the local school is not preferred."*

*"Potentially very detrimental to our village given the impact it could have on schools."*

*"Schools loosing funding. Schools being hit with an influx of pupils with a lack of funding/resource. Will CBC then fund expansion of these schools? Where is this cost in the proposal?"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Some schools will lose pupils and some will be oversubscribed. Some schools will gradually become unviable."*

### **Will be difficult if siblings at different schools:** 81 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 55 comments

*"Some schools will lose pupils and some will be oversubscribed. Some schools will gradually become unviable."*

*"Could split families between different schools, as the proposed arrangements would not allow younger brothers and sisters to attend the same school as older siblings if the family lives closer to a different school"*

*"Our village is divided between 6 different schools that my children could be sent to if I have to select the nearest in the application instead of the one school my eldest already attends. I could have 4 children pulled in various directions which would still require Council transportation- it's a false economy and damaging to the family unit"*

*"My children will not be able to attend the same school"*

*"I have 3 children, 2 who currently use the service. It would be impossible for me to get all 3 of them to school on time as well as getting to my job."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 12 comments

*"Parents with children at school and starting the same school will have to start funding or making alternative arrangements for children who attend the same school to get there."*

*"Huge impact on parental choice, potentially friends or at it's worst siblings sent to opposite schools despite being from the same villages etc. Therefore will impact significantly the enjoyment of school for students, this may then have a negative impact on attendance/academic performance."*

*"Families will be split amongst different schools to qualify for the school bus."*

*"No real cost saving and huge impacts to the school and families. Families will be divided between various schools to qualify for school transport"*

*"Impact on families where children will go to different schools due to financial impact of this change. Impact on parental choice- not all schools offer the same support or extra curricular opportunities which is essential for a broad experience for children"*

#### **Other resident** 11 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"The impact might be on children who have siblings at a particular school that is currently catchment but will no longer be the nearest."*

*"Children will get less choice of school and maybe separated from their siblings."*

*"The nearest school may not be the same school as their siblings attend."*

*"The impact of the proposed change will cause major issues for us in getting our children to and from school with work commitments it would also be another massive expense to us when we are already struggling financially."*

*"We all get one chance at education and the needs of the child must come first. It maybe they need to go to school with a sibling to help them cope with the school environment."*

## **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing: 77 comments received**

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 49 comments**

*"My child's decision to go to his catchment upper school was based on having a bus. Now this changes that and will now cause my son anxiety as I now need his school place to be changed to his nearest school."*

*"Families will not be able to afford the bus fare. Children's choice of schools will be limited, therefore having an effect on their wellbeing."*

*"It will impact an already anxious and emotional child having to go to a school that they've never heard of and without friends or siblings."*

*"the mental wellbeing of children could be affected by parental anxiety caused by the unexpected change."*

*"Now for us as parents to tell our child we don't know what secondary/upper school you're now going to as well as we now don't know if your friends will be there. It's not good on their mental health."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 8 comments**

*"My children who are currently in Lower school in The Firs. They did not get into Silsoe lower hence why their education is in Ampthill. I wanted them to enjoy independence when getting school bus to Redbourne in future. It would greatly affect us as a family if this is not available."*

*"Attendance for those at a school which is not their nearest school could suffer without transport."*

*"Huge financial impact on parents and wellbeing of kids"*

*"Bad impact on the children as local school will not be in catchment so may be separated from friends due to availability of free transport."*

**Other resident** 8 comments

*"Not positive more pressure on children and parents and most stressful is the sense of uncertainty"*

*"Less choice for parents and detrimental impact to children and their wellbeing"*

*"To the detriment of the pupils."*

*"A lot more people driving their children to school and reducing the quality of life for those affected."*

**Don't do it/negative impact:** 75 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 44 comments

*"I respectfully would decline this option."*

*"I disagree with the proposal. I believe parents and children should still have the option of allowing school transport for catchment area along with closest school. This ensures families have choice within their local area."*

*"Why change something that isn't broken? Im sure there are other ways to cut cost without having a negative impact on children"*

*"Devastating on all of my kids."*

*"I disagree with this change, because a school is closer should not automatically mean it is the correct school for a child."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 14 comments

*"This will have a negative effect on pupil premium children and poor families above all else, it is a terrible idea, stop making cuts to our schools."*

*"Negative"*

*"I think school transport should be given to the OFFERED PLACE OF EDUCATION not NEAREST"*

*"This is not right. You are separating children who have been together all through primary and middle school."*

**Other resident** 9 comments

*"Really unfair for pupils who have chosen a more distant school and been accepted at that school."*

*"Stop students from not having funding for school transport where it might be better for them to go to the catchment school"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"This is a bad idea for several reasons: There will be no savings made until the last of the current;y admitted children have left their current establishment a minimum of four years and in the meantime there will be two systems running which will be more expensive and not less. It reduces parental choice for working parents who cannot take their children to school. Some families will have to have their children at different schools as the younger children will not get transport to the older child's school."*

### **Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc): 73 comments received**

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 46 comments**

*"My child will not be able to attend school as I won't be able to afford the bus costs. I'm a single parent on low income were are not in receipt of free school meals. Therefore there will be no way to get her to school or I would have to not work and do the school run."*

*"My son will need to get the school bus to school as I do not drive and my partner works early mornings it will affect his well-being due to being accepted into sandy secondary and would be very upset to be told that he would have to change school to get to and from school"*

*"Beyond the environmental toll, this shift disproportionately affects families without access to a car or flexible work schedules, creating serious equity concerns."*

*"My child will not be able to attend school. I work and rely on the school transport to get her too and from. Being a single parent with no family around my child would not be able to get to school due to it being a hour and a half walk to Robert Bloomfield from lowerstondon. Therefore she wouldn't be attending."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 11 comments**

*"Difficulty taking child to school"*

*"Cause alot of issues for parents getting their children to school alongside working"*

*"Parents with the wherewithal to provide private transport can pick and choose the best school for their child, whereas a poorer family, or one without the benefit of a desk job and perhaps flexible working, cannot do so."*

*"My children will not be able to go to their preferred school in future as we will not be able to get them there. We may even struggle to get them to the nearest school"*

#### **Other resident 11 comments**

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Some children in catchment areas won't be able to get to school. Disruption to parents working schedules if they have to take time out of work to take/collect children."*

*"will take away choice in the future due to cost of transport to families and also time constraints taking children to school."*

### **Consider the impact of children in villages:** 69 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 51 comments

*"I'm worried about the villages. I live in Eaton Bray and my Child attends Linslade Middle. He gets a bus that we pay for annually. He will go to Cedars which is next to Linslade and he cannot walk there. He has spent the past 3 years there. He needs transport as do other children in the village."*

*"For those of us in smaller villages school transport is the only option, but if a child unlikely to be accepted into the school that they are able to have the transport too then they're education will suffer or the transport will not be used increasing emissions (presumably the opposite effect that is intended with this proposal) as parents/carers will be required to drive students to school. Again for those of us in the smaller villages of the county would have no other alternative."*

*"I think the council is unlikely to make the savings anticipated as many of the nearest schools are already fully subscribed and therefore the council would still need to provide transport to pupils second choice school which is likely to be the catchment school. This would result in the need to run 2 or more buses from the same village thus actually costing more."*

*"Being a remote village, the bus transport is compulsory to get the children to school."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"Negative as we have many villages and towns that can mean that a village may have many different schools to get transportation to under this proposal, being inefficient and likely wasting all the money that its proposed to save."*

*"Village communities are important and this change would hugely impact this. It also makes no sense, with various buses travelling through the villages to different destinations. Opposite to what the whole point of this change is about. Sadly, until the council look at the bigger picture and all the aspects affecting the school system in this area, the impact will be huge for these smaller communities."*

#### **Other resident** 11 comments

*"Every child should have the education they wish to have, Harlington Upper School is a direct link from the middle school - having the school bus enables children to carry on on the pathway , We are a village and we should be able to provide transport to the schools in our catchment."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"We live rural and the local school is already oversubscribed so sometimes pupils are sent to other schools - if this change went through some of those pupils would not be able to get to school without huge costs to the parents who may not be able to afford it."*

*"Very difficult as there isn't a viable bus service into the village to make it possible for children to travel on public transport. Once again we are being excluded in public transport provision."*

## Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school: 57 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 48 comments

*"Buses can be unreliable and with no safe walking route what alternatives does that leave?"*

*"The entrance to Woodland would be incredibly dangerous to have buses...it would require a substantial overhaul to make it possible for buses to drop children off there."*

*"My son wants to stay on at All Saints Academy Dunstable for 6th form, however he will not be eligible for transport. There is NO public bus or way to walk there. Please help."*

*Children will be unable to get to school safely within the village if transport is removed*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 4 comments

*"Walking to Etonbury Academy in the most direct route would be across farm fields, along the train station slip road to cross the train line and up through Arlesey. The walking route to Henlow Academy is equally unsuitable due to the narrow footpath along the B659 Hitchin Road beside a 50mph road, and having to cross the A507 roundabout. I understand the point of providing transport when going past other suitable schools, however that is not the situation in this local area of Henlow."*

*"For many, their nearest school is still a considerable distance from where they live. For my child living in Pulloxhill, woodlands in Flitwick would be the nearest school which is over 2 miles away. This distance would take the average adult just under an hour to walk, yet we are to expect children as young as 9 to walk this with the weight of their school books and still expect them to concentrate well during the day in school."*

### Other resident 4 comments

*"An increase in journeys by private vehicles, causing even worse traffic chaos and making it even more dangerous for children to travel independently."*

*"Due to the very poor availability of safe walking routes in many rural areas a number of children and families are going to be severely disadvantaged."*

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Separates friends:** 55 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 40 comments

*"I think it will prevent freedom of choice of education, lead to children being separated from their friends and isolated as they transition to a new school"*

*"Poor impact on children's social ability, effecting education"*

*"It will impact on children's ability to maintain friendships and go with friends to the feeder school. Friendship is so important and even more so given all the successive changes they're having to go through with these changes to school systems at present. Their schooling has already been impacted upon and they deserve to have consistency of friendships."*

*"One of these villages is Clophill where children living streets apart will qualify for funded transport to different schools, potentially splitting peer groups not once but twice at the middle and upper school transitions."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 6 comments

*"As pupils in Holywell who live in wootton will now not be offered transport to Holywell when it transitions to a high school. This they will need to go to wootton just to save a few quid. Ruining friendships and togetherness these pupils have with each other which is more important."*

**Other resident** 5 comments

*"The changes will mean additional costs incurred for some families to keep their children in the catchment area school within Central Beds. If they do not fund their own transport, it will mean that Children living in Barton-le-Clay will be divided when they go to Secondary School, depending on their postcode location in the Village. This will split peer groups built up at Lower and Middle schools."*

*"It could have a horrible impact on a child if they're effectively forced to attend a school that their friends etc. don't go to just based on distance."*

**Will be increasing carbon footprint:** 43 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 25 comments

*"More children will be driven to Sandy which will have a negative environmental impact and lead to congestion"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"If this goes ahead one of my children will be going on the school bus and then i will have to drive my second child to school INCREASING TRAFFIC AND CARBON EMISSIONS in our area. I think considerations should be made for families who already have siblings at the catchment school who already qualify for school transport"*

*"More cars on narrow lanes causing more larger carbon foot print not less. Blocked roads due to more traffic longer queues, more fumes for car's waiting in traffic."*

*"Bus travel to schools within the catchment area should remain as it is. The whole reason we have options is surely to find a school that is best suited to our children and their needs. We are in a cost-of-living crisis, so it will impact families financially and if we are going to see a big increase in children being driven to school (because it is too far or not suitable to walk to) then that has a big cost to the environment as well."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 8 comments

*"I can understand the logic on the cost saving and why should the council foot the cost above and beyond the current national guidance when money could be spent better elsewhere but I am not sure the environmental benefits have been fully considered."*

*"This will have a big impact on local traffic and congestion as well as carbon emissions (even assuming only a half full bus, annual carbon emissions will more than double from circa 3.5TCO2 to 8.6TCO2"*

### Other resident 6 comments

*"The idea that this will be a greener solution is ridiculous, many parents will be driving to the schools, increasing the number of vehicles on the road, congestion, (in particular, the amount of traffic near schools) and using more fuel. possibly the best green solution would be to use electric vehicles."*

*"i think it will put more cars on the road, so won't achieve the green credentials that you suggest, but i agree that a more consistent approach is fairer and more sensible"*

### Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments: 41 comments received

#### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 29 comments

*"Increase pressure on schools that will have to make space as they will have catchment area schools as opposed to the feeder school structure."*

*"For my child, the 'feeder' school would be Samual Whitbread, this would definitely not be the nearest, but could be the preferred as eveyone they know will be going there."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"My children are currently at Toddington St George's and will attend Parkfields, this change would mean they would no longer be eligible for transport to Harlington Upper School which is in the same Pyramid Trust as Parkfields, let alone being split from the children in the village they are grown up with which would have a huge impact on their wellbeing"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"We propose that CBC develop a specific transport solution for Shefford, Clifton, and surrounding villages. This solution should recognise the close proximity of schools, the multiple different phases of education currently in operation, and the historical feeder patterns that have served this community well."*

### **Other resident** 4 comments

*"Children will be forced to go to their nearest school, which may not be part of an established community, trust/pyramid group of schools. The nearest school may not be the same school as their siblings attend."*

### **Supportive comment:** 35 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 9 comments

*"I totally support the change. I do t think it should apply to anyone even those with education care plans if they don't go to the nearest suitable a ho."*

*"In agreement"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 7 comments

*"I agree."*

*"This is a good thing. It's bonkers that children in Biggleswade should have their transport costs covered when we have excellent schools in the town."*

### **Other resident** 19 comments

*"It is correct what you are proposing. The worst thing happen when any child can go to any school. School should only be in catchment areas and therefore transport provided to those living in the catchment area."*

*"It will align with other councils Given the timescale of implementation it will give parents time to plan transport if they wish to send their children to a different school"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"I think that the proposal is sound and that free transport should be provided to the NEAREST school only"*

### **3 to 2 tier comment:** 33 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 20 comments

*"Due to Central Beds not being able to complete the transition to 2 tier schooling, some areas of the County are between 2 systems (Shefford villages area for example)."*

*"Comparisons to other counties are irrelevant when they don't use the three tier system as we do."*

*"The new policy limits parental choice by only funding transport to the nearest school. This is especially concerning given the councils decisions to halt of the transition from three-tier to two-tier education in our area, as this means the nearest school to my family may not be the school I wish for my children to attend."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"This is likely to have an impact on the children living in Leighton Buzzard as the catchment areas for school needs a review/ it needs to move to a 2 tier system."*

*"A lot of children would be moved from 2-3 tier school systems and a concern for school places"*

#### **Other resident** 3 comments

*"However, when CBC halted the transition from three-tier to two-tier education in our cluster, it created a mixed economy of different educational phases. This means the nearest school to a family may not be the school they wish to attend."*

### **If parents want to send a child to a school that is not nearest, they should have to pay:** 28 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"The people affected have chosen to buy high value homes without factoring in transport costs. These parents are also high earners spending more money on socialising, expensive overseas holidays. All children should pay for school transport unless medical or financial assessment says otherwise. No change will bankrupt CBC like Birmingham CC or Northampton"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 9 comments

*"I funded my children's transport as I chose an out of borough school which is fair. I shouldn't have to fund children choosing a non-local school."*

*"Anything which saves money is a good thing. For those people who choose to send their child to a school outside their catchment area, they should also make provision for their own transport and/or the costs associated with their child getting to school."*

### **Other resident** 15 comments

*"If parents want to send their children to a different school then they should fund transport costs themselves"*

*"Anyone who chooses a school for their children that is not their local school should be responsible for the transport of their children to that school."*

### **Money that could be used elsewhere:** 27 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

*"MORE MONEY FOR OTHER MORE IMPORTANT THINGS"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"I think parents need to take a lot more responsibility for transport and am saddened you are wasting precious money on school transport."*

*"I am 100% supportive of the proposed changes. The proportion of the budget spent on these transportation costs is obviously unsustainable and is noticeably affecting multiple other services the council has to provide."*

### **Other resident** 19 comments

*"The Council will save a lot of much needed money to support other more needy services for the area."*

*"Hopefully less money spent transporting children which may be better utilised."*

### **Can't see that it will save money:** 21 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 13 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"There are no cost benefits as CBC will still be providing transport but not necessarily to a child's catchment school. I do not support this proposal by CBC."*

*"If the changes are approved, in the case of Stanbridge and Tilsworth, it will actually INCREASE the transport costs for Central Beds. Transport is currently provided for Cedars school and this will continue for those children already receiving transport as this is the catchment school for the area."*

*"there will be a split in the village which will impact on friendship groups and instead of saving money, it will cost more because the council will be sending 4 bus services into the village."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 3 comments

*"While there will be a saving to costs for transport, I think it is erroneous to suggest that this will present an overall saving."*

### **Other resident** 5 comments

*"Won't REALLY save money ( once you reconcile all budgets it'll probably end up costing more ) and will actually INCREASE pollution and traffic ( EHCP students etc utilising taxis instead of buses )."*

*"It will not make the savings suggested and will cause considerable disruption to pupils and schools"*

## **Stress/anxiety for parents leading up to change in school/phase change:** 16 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 11 comments

*"It will have a huge impact on work and family life."*

*"Confusion and upset"*

*"Additional pressure and costs put on parents."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"More hassle and stress for parents"*

### **Other resident** 2 comments

*"Anxiety for parents and children in the year leading to a phase change. Uncertainty for schools 'changing or extending their existing phase offer."*

**More traffic fumes, from cars:** 15 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 11 comments

*"The change will also dramatically increase the number of cars on the road and add to an already over congested and pollution filled school run."*

*"Absolutely ridiculous suggestion that does not have the children's best interest at heart and in reality means parents would all just drop their children at the catchment school, causing traffic and having major environmental impact and impacting the people of Harlington traffic wise."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*" This will have a big impact on local traffic and congestion as well as carbon emissions"*

**Other resident** 1 comment

*"many parents will be driving to the schools, increasing the number of vehicles on the road, congestion, (in particular, the amount of traffic near schools) and using more fuel. possibly the best green solution would be to use electric vehicles."*

**Less traffic around schools:** 14 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 1 comment

*"Less traffic in areas surrounding school. Cost reduction in providing transport."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"Save money and fewer buses on the road"*

*"Less traffic on the roads as fewer buses needed which is both more environmentally friendly and also safer for road users."*

**Other resident** 7 comments

*"Less traffic and a fairer scheme"*

*"Cut down the amount of buses on the road at school opening and closing times."*

**Inconvenience/disruptive:** 10 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 6 comments

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"There is no nearer school on the same tier system and this would be very disruptive and confusing for him and for many other children in the same situation."*

*"The impact will obviously be a financial one and there will of course be a lot of upset."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 0 comments

**Other resident** 4 comments

*"cost savings and inconvenience for some"*

**Not a one size fits all/means test parents:** 10 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"All schools are different and some children benefit more one school over another, some children for example would find RBA overwhelmingly due to its size..."*

*"Cannot use a blanket approach to children's right to schooling if transport is a limitation."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 4 comments

*"I believe it should move to a means tested approach so that low income families are not left with the financial burden of trying to get their child to school."*

**Other resident** 3 comments

*"Cannot see why children of poor families are exempt from walking Criterion should be disabilities and not income of families"*

**More info needed:** 10 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 5 comments

*"You explained how much saving would be made but you have not explained how this saving would benefit the pupils, indicating that the saving is purely for Council and no consideration for the main people impacted, the pupils."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"It is unclear how this will impact the Cranfield / Marston area as we are currently going through 3 Tier to 2 Tier. Therefore the consultation is unclear on these changes."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"I don't know as it's unclear what the outcome for my son will be as you don't refer to nearest school AT POINT OF ENTRY. "*

### **Other resident** 3 comments

*"This proposal may reduce pollution with shorter journeys and less buses, but there's no mention of the flip side of increased number of car journeys for pupils no longer eligible that will far outweigh the environmental saving of buses emissions."*

### **No impact for most:** 8 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

*"very little for most with the possible exception of genuine hardship stopping a gifted child from gaining a place at a school which would disqualify him/her from receiving help with transport costs."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"There will be no impact on me or my family"*

### **Other resident** 5 comments

*"None as most homes either have a car or, if within a mile, walk to school or cycle."*

*"Most of the schools in Dunstable are of a good standard so I feel the change should have little impact. Specialist schools for disability is another matter."*

### **This would be in line with neighbouring LA's:** 8 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 0 comments

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"reduced cost, clearer guidance and in line with other local authorities/DfE guidance."*

### **Other resident** 6 comments

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Align with other council and save money. Pupils will still be able to attend their local school."*

*"Fairer application of policy. Alignment with adjoining areas."*

**Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round:** 7 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 6 comments

*"We are extremely disappointed to see you're consulting on this again so soon after the previous consultation."*

*"It is misguided and nonsensical to continue with this proposal, and particularly since your own Overview & Scrutiny Committee flatly rejected it."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 0 comments

**Other resident** 1 comment

*"A near identical consultation happened less than a year ago and the council decided to keep things as they were. At this point we chose our son's secondary school (Sandy) and were told he would have transport funded as he is in catchment. This proposal would remove that after we have already committed to that school!"*

**Look at other ways to raise the money:** 7 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"There are other places you should be cutting huge costs , such as in road and traffic management and spending millions on unnecessary roundabouts."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Lots of change for students when it is not necessary. There are better ways to save money"*

**Other resident** 2 comments

*"Parents have the right to choose which school they want their child to go to but the associated transport costs of them going to a school out of catchment should not burden budgets that are already stretched paid for by council tax"*

**Makes it clearer:** 6 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 0 comments

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 3 comments

*"It will make 'rules' and expectations clearer and easy to understand. It should have some positive affect on rising costs."*

**Other resident** 2 comments

*"It will be a clearer guideline for all concerned & save money."*

**Encourage active travel:** 5 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 0 comments

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Less traffic on the roads as fewer buses needed which is both more environmentally friendly and also safer for road users. There may need to be some further investment into suitable pedestrian walkways and crossings."*

**Other resident** 4 comments *"Reduction in carbon footprint, improvement in air quality, budgetary saving to council tax payers of £8.9 million up to 2031/32, increase in children travelling by foot or bicycle"*

## Appendix ii: Q.13 comments by stakeholder group

### Do you have any comments on the proposed change to nearest school?

Some examples of the comments from Question 13 have been included below and broken down into the main themes by stakeholder:

Please note that within this breakdown, the combined comments may not always add up to the total figure given due to this breakdown being for the 3 specific stakeholding groups. If the total differs from the addition of these 3 groups this is due to other respondents outside of these groups also responding with these themes.

**School funding over/under subscription issues/admission numbers:** 79 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 53 comments

*"We want my child to go to the nearest school. However we do not meet its admissions criteria and as it's oversubscribed are likely to be forced to go to the catchment school. If central beds admissions department make this decision for my child then you should be expected to cover the transport costs of getting him there."*

*"This will not support families to have children at their chosen school. Children have been going from potton school to Sandy for years, this will massively affect the schools intake and have a huge effect of local families."*

*"This proposal will only work if you also change the school catchment areas. It makes no sense to have a transport policy that is different to school admissions policies. Where schools are positioned in more densely populated areas, more pupils will live closer and these schools will become oversubscribed, whereas schools in more rural areas will have less pupils, potentially making them unviable."*

*"The decision does not take into account the impact on already seriously under funded school budgets and it does not consider the impact on the environment of increased car use."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 7 comments

*"The over subscription needs to be considered for this area"*

*"This is particularly short-sighted when Sandy Secondary is NOT an academy but is still a maintained school; CBC has just spent a lot of money to allow an increased capacity yet is now proposing to effectively slash intake."*

**Other resident** 12 comments

*"Schools should be made to find places for the nearest pupils."*

*"Make sure that the closest schools offer equal educational standard to any of those in catchment area"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"In an established community. i.e where there are no new schools being built, has CBC taken in account that the nearest school (rather than catchment school) may not have capacity for the additional students i.e. the nearest school is already oversubscribed. Your analysis suggests that some schools will have fewer children attending. Has the impact on the long term financial stability of these schools been assessed?"*

*"The reasons why parents chose not to send their children to the most local school need to be considered. Parents want to send their children to what is perceived to be the "best school" in their area. More work needs to be done to improve schools with a poor reputation to ensure that parents can be assured their children are getting a good standard of education by sending their children to the most local school."*

**Lack of/right of choice:** 76 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 39 comments

*"Removes choices of schools for parents which I don't agree with"*

*"We live in a small village and my child has no option other than to take school transport. By removing this you remove choice for parents - affecting mental Wellbeing and increasing financial pressures on families"*

*"Children should have a right to choose the school that closely meets their academic, social and physical needs, this will massively limit those basic rights and decisions for their future."*

*"We are a rural community so cannot be the same as all councils. The quality/suitability of nearest schools is very inconsistent. Fulbrook is not yet proven. Don't force children there if there are places elsewhere."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 11 comments

*"It will drastically reduced the chance for parents to send their children to school that may be a future away. This is a bad idea that will impact choice and education levels for our children."*

*"I believe parents and children should have a choice in what school they go to, within reason, however religious schools do not have a catchment and there is no noted provision for transport to these locations."*

**Other resident** 14 comments

*"For new pupils you have a stronger case but many children need to be able to choose a more distant school which better suites their talents. To deny their choice of school where parents need free transport is very unjust and contrary to government policy."*

*"Sometimes the nearest school doesn't have a good rating and it unfair to force a child of ability into an underperforming school"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Parents should have a choice to send their children to the best school for their child within the catchment area and not be constrained financially by this proposed change."*

### **Think of safety for children to travel to nearest school:** 72 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 55 comments

*"A lot of children in rural areas rely on transport to schools, especially as there are no suitable walking routes as schools are far away, with no paths."*

*"If a child is expected to walk any route under 3 miles, who has the say on what is a safe route? Rural unlit pathways, many on roads with 60mph speed limit are not safe for adults in winter when it is dark at 4pm, let alone a child."*

*"Central Bedfordshire is a largely rural area, made up of smaller towns and villages, many children are unable to walk or cycle to their nearest, or catchment area, school. Many of the roads are narrow country roads, with no public footpaths; or busy 60/70mph dual/single carriageways. Also there is very limited public transport, across the county in general, but specifically to schools. Removing the catchment area criteria will significantly affect children who receive a place at their catchment area school, even though it may not be their closest school, resulting in them being unable to access compulsory education."*

*"I feel the proposal has significant health and safety implications. The consultation suggests that the new policy will support sustainable travel. Families in our village would be expected to walk a route that currently has significant stretches with no pavements, no walkable grass verge, no street lighting, insufficient crossing points or cycle paths on a road that serves M1 J12 to Harlington Station. I feel to achieve this a number of safety assessments and actions would need to be undertaken and are not transparently highlighted as costs as part of this consultation."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 6 comments

*"School provision has not been designed to ensure that all pupils can attend their 'local' school - suggesting that pupils will walk or cycle is fantasy - we are still a largely rural area with inadequate path and cycle ways."*

*"When you live in a village, your nearest catchment school can be many miles away. Providing no transport means children will miss out on education. It is not like a town catchment criteria where most people in a town living within walking distance to their nearest school."*

#### **Other resident** 10 comments

*"Some children could walk to school which is the healthier but some children don't have that choice of walking to school because they have a motorway to cross and is too dangerous so a bridge over the motorway or an underpath would be an improvement overall."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"There aren't even pavements on some of the roads children would need to negotiate to walk to their local school."*

*"In rural areas it is often not safe for pupils to walk or cycle to their nearest school, for example Westoning."*

### **Don't do it/re think proposal:** 62 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 42 comments

*"This makes no sense - the transport needs to follow the catchments How can schools budget based on catchment if catchment children can't have transportation?"*

*"Barton still has a three tier school system. Your proposes just wont workl. It will affect too many of the smaller villages that get buses to Arnold Academy. The school is already filling up with children from luton whose parents can drive them here."*

*"It's wrong and should just stay as it is"*

*"Strongly disagree with the changes proposed. It cuts off choice for parents to choose school that best fits their child within catchment area. Closest school is not always best fit for a child. By restricting transport to closest schools cuts of the option of choice for families."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 10 comments

*"This proposal is CBC strategy to shift its costs to parents and carers. There is no benefit for pupils or schools in disrupting the current status and just because neighbouring LAs have adopted 'a nearest school approach' doesn't make it right for CBC residents."*

*"I completely agree that students should attend their nearest school. The way to do that, is to change the catchments to be the nearest school."*

#### **Other resident** 7 comments

*"The council decided which school is the catchment school for local residents and therefore transport should be provided where it is too far to travel by foot or too dangerous (ie no footpaths or high risk roads/crossing etc) to that catchment school. It is unfair too remove the school transport when a family have chosen to send their school to the school the council have stated as the catchment area because there is a school closer."*

*"Yes, disagree with them."*

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Will result in more parents cars/buses on the road:** 60 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 36 comments

*“where schools are closest yet the danger to a child walking on unlit paths or crossing major roads transport needs to be provided - some routes are just not safe for children to use at any time of the year - more so in the winter months less buses may cut emissions - increase in cars taking children will not! Also increased danger to other children and families walking - some village schools especially lower schools do not have capacity for additional cars either in front of the gates or surrounding streets/roads”*

*“By providing transport to nearest school more parents will need to drive to the catchment school. Creating more emissions with more cars on the road.”*

*“Rural communities like Clophill will have buses to both schools travelling through the village as half the village will qualify for transport to one school and the other half to another school - therefore, there would be no saving with this policy. Villages such as Clophill should be treated more fairly and be given the option to go to either school that is closest to the village at the East or West point.”*

*“This would force more cars onto the road when what we would like to see is less.”*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 11 comments

*“Changing the rules will only penalise poorer families and put more cars on the road as parents try to get their children to school.”*

*“No doubt that instead of forcing children to their 'nearest school' which might not always be the best choice for them, their parents will end up having to drive them there and back, resulting in hundreds of extra journeys rather than one bus route.”*

**Other resident** 10 comments

*“The council will have to be prepared for extra traffic as more cars could be on the roads.”*

*“You would run less buses but there would be a car on the roads for each pupil that your bus could be doing! “*

*“I support the move. However, as a resident that lives by a school I’m concerned about the daily buses on a road that is not suitable and the possible increase of pupils being transported by car”*

**Supportive comment:** 59 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 13 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"As previous comment - concept in principle seems sound. Except where nearest school is out of area. This needs to be clearer."*

*"As long as this doesn't apply for children that have SEN needs or other medical needs such as anxiety. It is extremely difficult to get an EHCP or diagnosis so in those cases the school should be selected on who can meet their needs rather than nearest school"*

*"It is in the wider benefit of people in the area."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 11 comments

*"Fully supportive, frankly we need to spend the money elsewhere."*

*"I don't understand why there is a need to provide transport to the nearest school if you can get there via walking or bike. If you live in rural areas I feel that there should be more options of providing transport but other than that people should be more active."*

*"I agree that transport should be provided to nearest school only, this could help more local people secure local schools for the children however I do not agree schools outside of CBC should be included in the 'nearest school' this should only be schools within CBC."*

### Other resident 35 comments

*"Please move forward with nearest school only"*

*"Good idea and a much fairer policy."*

*"Provided the schools provide decent education, this should not be a problem."*

*"A very good idea saving money from our council tax"*

## Costs to parents who can't afford transport: 50 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 31 comments

*"We wholeheartedly agree with the concerns already raised that the proposals would: - cause great harm to children's education and wellbeing, as the collaborative work undertaken with catchment schools would be undone if pupils were directed to other schools - have a huge financial impact on parents, as they we be forced to pay for a service that is currently free - bring about a great reduction in pupil numbers"*

*"Saving taxpayers money is really important, but it feels like this saving would impact working families the most, so it seems a little counterproductive to be hitting them with another financial implication of either adjusting working hours to get their children to and from school (income impact and fuel increase), or have to juggle multiple schools at the same time and miss important milestones because they can't be at all the schools at the same time."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Parents may face considerable financial pressures, as they could be required to pay for school transport that is currently provided free of charge."*

*"This unfairly targets efficiency savings on hard working families who are already affected by the cost of living."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 7 comments

*"I think there are many other ways to cut costs for the council other than doing this to disrupt children and the parents who will have to find other arrangements at their cost to get them to school."*

*"I do not believe this will be for the good of any child!! This will have a huge financial impact on all parents!"*

### **Other resident** 9 comments

*"Not acceptable Rich parents will be able to get round it and so choices for those with less money will be reduced"*

*"The biggest impact on parents will be on those least able to afford paying the extra to send their children to the school of their choice. The proposed change goes against best practices in diversity, inclusivity, and equality policy."*

## **Consider the impact of children in villages:** 48 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 36 comments

*"It's a blunt policy that will lead to unfairness and difficulties (particularly for rural villages where walking is not feasible). As long as the school is among the nearest, transport should still be provided. A difference of a mile makes no real difference to cost savings or other factors but will make life more difficult for families."*

*"This proposal is madness and it doesn't consider those children who live Silsoe and who have no option regarding walking or biking to either the nearest school or indeed catchment school"*

*"Negative. I have a daughter in year 9 who attends Sandy secondary school, via free school bus. I want my other daughter, in year 4 to also attend Sandy secondary via a free school bus. I cannot afford to pay for transport myself. My daughters cannot walk or bike from Potton to Sandy - have you travelled that road, it is 60 mph and dangerous with no footpath"*

*"This proposal seems to have a negative impact on the smaller villages in central beds where children attend "feeder" schools but then will not qualify for transport to their catchment school."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 4 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"For many, their nearest school is still a considerable distance from where they live. For my child living in Pulloxhill, woodlands in Flitwick would be the nearest school which is over 2 miles away. This distance would take the average adult just under an hour to walk, yet we are to expect children as young as 9 to walk this with the weight of their school books and still expect them to concentrate well during the day in school."*

### **Other resident** 4 comments

*"Taking the example of Lower Stondon to Henlow school, there are no wide safe walk/cycleways on this route for young children if you are suggesting they could use them as an alternative to a provided bus"*

## **Lack of choice damaging to a child's learning and wellbeing:** 43 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 29 comments

*"If the change were to happen, it would split children in our village and this would have a negative impact on the wellbeing and mental health of our children."*

*"This will create a stressful environment affecting children both mentally and academically."*

*"I do not think this will benefit the children and will cause a rise in anxiety and mental health in children"*

*"Many children will be required to choose between staying with their peer group and paying for transport, or attending a different school alone simply to access the free service. This fragmentation is likely to be distressing and unsettling for children, particularly at a time in their education where continuity and a sense of belonging are critical. Social cohesion, emotional wellbeing, and pupils' sense of stability will all be affected"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"will have a massive effect on the environment, roads, finances, mental health of parents and children."*

*"Have you ever stopped to consider how the proposed changes will affect our children?"*

### **Other resident** 4 comments

*"Children's educational needs and welfare is paramount. The school that supports them with those needs is the correct school and the location is secondary."*

*"There has been no consideration taken into account of pupil wellbeing. with friendship groups and siblings being split up."*

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Will be difficult if siblings at different schools:** 36 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 27 comments

*"Harm to Family Cohesion Families could be forced to send siblings to different schools due to arbitrary proximity rules."*

*"If the policy is to change, it should be the case that where there is already a sibling at the secondary school/with a place at the secondary school, all other siblings can continue to benefit from the transport. Otherwise, you create a situation where siblings may be forced to attend different schools. This is not appropriate. - There is a difference between a nearest school policy in a built up/town centre area with good transport links etc, and a similar policy in a rural area where schools (particularly secondary schools) are likely to be a long distance away and not necessarily on appropriate walking routes."*

*"We will have one child attending Sandy school with funded transport but for our son we will need to either send him to the nearest school or suffer financial hardship to send him to the same school as his sibling. This would prove to be a stressful decision and one we don't feel we should have to make."*

*"Split families between different schools, as the proposed arrangements would not allow younger brothers and sisters to attend the same school as older siblings if the family lives closer to a different school."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Younger siblings will not be guaranteed transport to attend the same school as their older siblings, if it's not the nearest school."*

**Other resident** 5 comments

*"I do think the sibling rule should also be considered so families are able to keep all children at same school Also, need to consider working parents and before and after school care, as this may influence why nearest school is not suitable."*

**Will be increasing carbon footprint:** 33 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 23 comments

*"Where public transport options are removed, it is more likely that parents will choose to drive which will increase the carbon footprint based on those plans."*

*"It will also increase the carbon footprint as more parents will have to drive their children to school. This will increase the risk to kids as there will be more cars around the schools."*

*"This change will have negative impact on the environment as instead of 1 bus there will be more car on the road taking pupils to school and having bigger impact on traffic on the roads."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Whilst the changes might allow the council to claim it is reducing its carbon footprint, actually you will find that more parents/carers are forced to driving their children to preferred school. Thus forcing more cars onto the roads during busy times of the day. There are plenty of examples of children being in walking distance of school but parents still driving them!"*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 7 comments

*"This will not reduce the carbon footprint of home to school travel as more pupils will go by individual car."*

*"Whilst this might reduce the number of buses and reduce the distance they travel, it will considerably increase the number of cars on the road (parents taking and collecting their children) and therefore likely increase carbon emissions"*

### Other resident 2 comments

*"Your argument in respect of pollution is particularly specious. Instead of the argument ( without data of course ) that this will reduce pollution ( it probably won't - see above ) you should be actively promoting zero emissions to the bus operators by utilising zero emission vehicles."*

## 3 to 2 tier comment: 32 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 18 comments

*"the nearest school does not align with the existing three-tier education system in our area; it is not a middle school, meaning our children would face a two-year educational gap with no school to attend—a consequence of a system the council previously committed to maintaining due to cost concerns."*

*"It makes sense to make these changes, but not across the whole area in one go. Surely these can be staggered, and the areas being impacted by three tier to two tier, should be delayed until these changes have been made."*

*"this should all be viewed holistically, with the merger of schools into two-tier education and an overall decision on catchment groupings. Just changing the transport offering alone is not going to help residents or schools especially when further changes need to be made around two-tier mergers."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 5 comments

*"The three tier / two tier school system needs to be addressed before the transport policy can be looked into."*

*"Please confirm three to two tier in Shefford area first before you change anything else"*

### Other resident 5 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Before any changes to the policy can be introduced, the Council should consider bringing schools in line with the education system - e.g. 2-Tier or 3-tier across the county boundaries."*

**If parents want to send a child to a school that is not the nearest, they should have to pay:** 29 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 5 comments

*"Children should be accessing their nearest school and having transport to that school. If the choice is to go to a different school, transport arrangements should be the responsibility of the parent"*

*"Only that it should have been transport to the nearest school all along. Unless there is no available space in the nearest school and parents are forced to take their children elsewhere, if parents don't want to send their children to the nearest school, it should be their expense that enables this."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 4 comments

*"i agree with it, why provide services that are not statutory, there are many households who do not have children or who do but live in towns where transport is not available anyway, why should they pay for village folks kids to get to school?"*

*"Parents will still have choice on where their child is educated but if they choose another school it's not unreasonable to expect them to make alternative transport arrangements - as many already do."*

### **Other resident** 18 comments

*"Parents will need to pick up the cost of taking their children to school / return journey - having a clear "nearest school" policy is a single statement which will affect each parent in a more equitable manner. "*

*"I cannot see any justification for free transport being provided for pupils going to a school of their choice (in effect) As a parent of children (now adults) i had always assumed they would be going to their nearest Upper School (Harlington in our case) and that transport would be provided because it was more than three miles away and there were no footpaths etc so walking was dangerous. If I decided that I wanted them to go to another school, getting them there was down to me. Seems sensible and right!"*

*"I agree with parents having a choice but don't think that the burden of transport should fall on anyone but the family."*

Feeder school/Pyramid Trust comments: 25 comments received

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 19 comments

*"...It will also disrupt the local network that has been established with the Harlington pyramid trust and risks financial difficulties for 1 school due to potential loss of pupils and overcrowding in another."*

*"We did not choose to apply to another school because his whole school life we have followed advise by CBC to send him to each feeder school and now you are taking away transport to this school. This is not morally correct. How can you leave children with no means to get to the school you, as a council suggest he attends."*

*"Not realistic for many parents who want to keep children within feeder schools"*

*"Home to school transport should be offered to all children who live in the area of ALL feeder schools from their lower to upper school - e.g. for us that's St Mary's Clophill, RBA and Samuel Whitbread. Anyone that is in the catchment for St Mary's should automatically be offered free home to school transport for the entirety of their school journey, within the feeders for their original school."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 2 comments

*"As a Potton resident we have always expected to feed on to Sandy secondary school. We've now been told that our new nearest school is changing because Edward Peake is swapping from a middle school to a secondary school. It will therefore have no track record as a secondary provider to judge it on when considering options. It also will not have a 6th form meaning my son will have to change school again at 16. I'm also concerned that as a small school it was not have the level of facilities that other secondary schools have."*

### Other resident 2 comments

*"This is an unwelcome proposal and will affect the options and potentially finances of many students and families in the rural villages in our area, also disrupting years of relationships between linked/feeder schools."*

## Some children won't be able to attend preferred school due to no paid transport (parents work commitments etc): 24 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 16 comments

*"I think it's very unfair that this could be put in place as of people like myself who don't drive and have a son going to sandy is very upsetting and stressful if the busses stop running to and from that school"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Pupils should receive transport to their catchment school. To not do that creates a burden on families who have a catchment but won't be able to get their children to school."*

*"Working parents. The only sensible option will be for more parents to reduce working hours and drive increasing traffic in school areas and plunging more children into poverty."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 0 comments

### **Other resident** 3 comments

*"This will restrict students who have no choice but to attend a local school, unless a parent has the money and ability to drive them to school."*

### **Separates friends:** 22 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 16 comments

*"The other boroughs are secondary schools not middle schools, there is a big age range difference, children of year 5 would potentially go to a school with only a handful of friends versus the current feeder schools"*

*"Considering we've had to deal with covid, our village school being shut down and the change in school holidays, please stop making school life so difficult for our children, by sending them away from their friends, sister, and sending them to schools that have no money and are incredibly run down."*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"This will separate pupils who have been together since lower school"*

### **Other resident** 3 comments

*"This will mean parents may not chose the best school for their children and children will be split from friends and family."*

### **Won't save money:** 21 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 12 comments

*"I think in some areas it may also end up costing more money than the current approach, particularly in areas that will be split between schools."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"I live in the village so my children attend the catchment school. I do not agree with this at all as in the long run it will cost more money."*

*"This is bad news for children, bad news for parents, bad news for the environment and will not result in the financial savings you envisage."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 5 comments

*"It will end up making transport arrangements less efficient and I find it hard to understand how there would be any savings from this."*

*"If the nearest school doesn't have any availability the child would be sent to the next nearest school with spaces - meaning that children could be transported halfway across the county to find a school with an available space. How does this equate to savings?"*

### Other resident 3 comments

*"I believe this will create increased costs. For example, you are likely to have multiple bus routes from Silsoe, including existing routes, when children have not managed to secure a place at their closest school due to over-subscription. There will be similar examples in other villages across the area."*

## Will save money: 20 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 3 comments

*"I think that using the nearest school criteria is fair and reasonable and the costs of school transport need to be reduced."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 2 comments

*"I can understand the logic on the cost saving and why should the council foot the cost above and beyond the current national guidance when money could be spent better elsewhere but I am not sure the environmental benefits have been fully considered."*

### Other resident 14 comments

*"i agree with the proposal to only provide transport to the nearest school, in line with DFE guidance and neighbouring authorities. I don't think the council can afford to keep providing extra services that they are not required to whilst other mandatory services lack funds."*

*"Good to reduce costs like this, makes sense."*

*"Taxpayers money should be prioritised for education, not transport."*

**Previous consultation on this...listen to what the people said the first time round:** 19 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 12 comments

*"Leave the policy as it is. This has already been turned down once why are you wasting money by revisiting the issue again"*

*"Where do we start... It is beyond belief this is being proposed again without any clear and identifiable change to the proposal"*

*"This consultation was thrown out only a very short time ago. We bought our house thinking we had the choice of Secondary Schools - our catchment school has a much better reputation"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 4 comments

*"It feels that that this decision was already made, and someone at the council is unhappy with it, and so is going over it until they get the answer they want."*

*"As per the last time you consulted it's still as clear as mud, what this proposal actually means for my son and all the kids in the village he lives in."*

**Other resident** 3 comments

*"It was rejected last year"*

*"A near identical consultation happened less than a year ago and the council decided to keep things as they were. At this point we chose our son's secondary school (Sandy) and were told he would have transport funded as he is in catchment. This proposal would remove that after we have already committed to that school!"*

**Evaluate cases/one size doesn't fit all:** 15 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 10 comments

*"One size does not fit all!"*

*"This blanket approach only works in towns but not the villages. Within Eversholt particularly you will need to send in multiple bus services due to the widespread of postcodes in the village. All the work that the Harlington trust has done to ensure the continuity of education for their pupils will be wasted. I urge you to maintain transport for catchment schools"*

*"As ever policies look good in the general but families specific needs MUST be taken into consideration."*

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"I think a lot of cases will need to be based on an individual basis and consider things like if there is already a sibling attending a certain school, or reasons as to why a child may NEED to attend a specific school: expulsion/ proven bullying/ family break up/ house move etc."*

**Other resident** 3 comments

*"All children are unique, one rule therefore cannot fit all."*

**More info needed:** 15 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 11 comments

*"This consultation doesn't link with the education plan. It is map drawing and calculations by a transport department clearly wholly unconnected with the strategic plan for education in CB. How will this impact pupils? What will you do about the disproportionate effect on some communities given the changes to schools that have been woefully planned by CBC? If better thought through I might agree with it - i.e. a phasing for newer schools (Sandy > Edward Peake). You absolutely must exclude siblings of existing pupils."*

*"Sometimes there is no place at the nearest school. What about special schools? What about students who are excluded from their nearest school and sent to school that are further away?"*

*"Can you confirm that a school bus will be put on for existing bus passes (not a public bus that has been mentioned) I have a child with asd and this will impact him in a big way if this goes ahead."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 0 comments

**Other resident** 3 comments

*"There is no information about whether or not the "nearest" school has capacity to take the pupils displaced from their "catchment" school. Has the council actually carried out an analysis of this."*

**Find savings elsewhere:** 13 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 6 comments

*"Surely you can do other cost cutting measures other than effecting children getting to school! if you start charging people or forcing parents to take the kids to the schools, you will make the congested roads even worse plus forcing children to cross/use unsafe roads."*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"The council should look to make savings elsewhere such as on non-mainstream transport. Savings here will be / could be far higher than savings found on mainstream transport, and impact less children."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 4 comments

*"I strongly feel this money should be found elsewhere. Children need to be able to have a choice in school, you're taking away choice and therefore potential future success and happiness by restricting children to one school"*

### Other resident 2 comments

*"Manage the budget in a different way."*

## Need cycle lanes/pathways: 12 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 7 comments

*"If there were more cycle ways to protect our children then cycling would be good BUT CBC have failed to provide this, this then means that parents, to keep their child safe, would have to drive to the school which would then make the carbon footprint higher not lower."*

*"If you want children to walk to their nearest school - then you need to provide safe pathways to enable them to do so."*

### Parent/Carers not accessing HTST 2 comments

*"if cycle routes are to be encouraged, please create them! We cycle most days but the number of car drivers who drive unsafely (at best) and illegally (at worst) is so off putting to us as cyclists. It is simply unsafe to think that children can easily cycle to school with the current level of ignorance of the majority of drivers I have encountered every day I cycle."*

### Other resident 3 comments

*"Your projected savings do not take into account the woeful provision of safe walking routes for rural communities across Central Bedfordshire. You will have to spend much more than the projected savings to achieve your goal of sustainable transport for schools. Where are the cycle ways where are the footpaths?"*

## Should be a choice between at least 2 nearest schools: 6 comments received

### Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND 3 comments

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"At least offer to the two/ three closest schools to be fairer."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 3 comments

*"PUPILS SHOULD HAVE A CHOICE OF AT LEAST 2 SCHOOLS. I FEEL THAT EVEN 2 IS RESTRICTIVE."*

**Other resident** 0 comments

**This would be in line with neighbouring LA's:** 5 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 0 comments

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Fully support this. If this is the norm in other areas then there is no justification for it to be different here."*

**Other resident** 3 comments

*"I believe that as long as the school transport is in line with government policies it should be adopted"*

## **Appendix iii: Q.14 comments by stakeholder group**

### **Suggestions on cost saving measures to consider**

Some examples of the comments from Question 14 have been included below and broken down into the main themes by stakeholder:

Please note that within this breakdown, the combined comments may not always add up to the total figure given due to this breakdown being for the 3 specific stakeholding groups. If the total differs from the addition of these 3 groups this is due to other respondents outside of these groups also responding with these themes.

**Council efficiencies/stop wasting money** 45 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 21 comments

*"This isn't a cost saving measure. It is a measure to assign costs to us as parents. It is a movement of cost. I'd suggest you preserve education at all costs and look to recover costs from other projects which I would deem of lower importance. I suspect a cursory glance at council initiatives would reveal at least a handful of vanity projects which could make way."*

*"Look at what you spend internally on wasted resource and project."*

*"We all pay a horrendous amount of council tax and I'm failing to see where this money is going."*

*"Don't save on this plan, just to waste it elsewhere"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 9 comments

*"Inviting more travel companies to offer the service at cheaper rates"*

*"Look at efficiencies in the council. There needs to be a restructure of the council as there are far too many people and not enough impact."*

**Other resident** 12 comments

*"Stop spending money on leisure services"*

*"All cost savings should be investigated and where appropriate implemented"*

*"Using transport contractors who are more fuel efficient rather than the old fuel hungry double deckers provided by many local coach companies."*

*"check that you are getting value for money wherever you spend"*

**More safer walking/cycle routes** 43 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 17 comments

*"Improving walking and cycle routes would be a start and ensuring efficient use of the busses - mostly double deckers I see - are they at capacity"*

*"If you could create a safe road from Gravenhurst to Shefford great but still not safe for 8 year olds to be biking or walking to school."*

*"Safe, lit cycle path routes would be very much appreciated. I still feel our location would be too far to walk for any of the nearest schools."*

*"again, why not 'optimise routes and improve walking routes' for the rural areas?"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 8 comments

*"I am all for encouraging pupils to walk or cycle to school, however, the route my child would need to take is too far to walk at each end of the day (particularly in winter months) and the route is not fully cycle friendly incorporating main roads and national speed limits. If an argument is going to*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*be put forward to encourage more walking and cycling, the routes need to be safer - separated from main roads and with better lighting."*

*"Improving cycling routes between villages and towns might also help where a walk might be a bit long for children to get to school."*

### **Other resident** 13 comments

*"Better footpaths within the school catchment area"*

*"Improving cycle routes and promoting cycling proficiency in the schools."*

*"Some children could walk to school which is the healthier option but some children don't have that choice of walking to school because they have a motorway to cross and is too dangerous so a bridge over the motorway or an underpath would be an improvement overall."*

### **Evaluate usage, no 1 child in bus/taxi – optimization** 37 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 19 comments

*"Optimising routes is probably the most feasible. Unfortunately with rural communities safe cycling/walking often isn't feasible."*

*"Reduce the amount of money that is spent on taxis for students."*

*"Use appropriate size buses/mini buses. We have a big coach for only 10 children.."*

*"Are the buses being used in the most economic way, do they use a double decker when a single decker would be suitable."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 11 comments

*"Reduce the use of taxis"*

*"Reduce the reliance on single occupant taxis for children accessing school transport"*

*"Stop wasting tax pay money On Taxis!"*

### **Other resident** 6 comments

*"Provide appropriate sized transport for the number of children to reduce carbon footprint."*

*"Remove taxi based travel for any students."*

### **Look at saving through less staff at CBC** 24 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 14 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Reduce the number of inefficient CBC staff and their over-inflated salaries, before cutting services to children."*

*"Get rid of the numerous CBC consultants that have wasted public money"*

*"Cut the staff in CBC doing this work"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 5 comments

*"Cut staff and get them back in the office"*

*"Yes, review the number of managers and leaders you have, having the same meetings and discussions the same things without talking to one another."*

### **Other resident** 5 comments

*"Staff costs ? Are there efficiencies to be made - Are staff more productive in the office ? - Look at how many people are needed to do a job (properly) - Too many top end managers?"*

*"Cut staff costs"*

## **Encourage active travel, cycling/walking to school** 19 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 4 comments

*"Cycle training and investment in safer cycle routes with routes to schools a priority would further reduce the need for school transport"*

### **Other resident** 12 comments

*"Children should be encouraged to bike to school as I was when I was a child"*

*"Scrap all freebies. Get them to all walk or bicycle."*

*"Parents who live close to a school should be encouraged to walk or cycle their children to school. Healthier for everyone."*

## **Look at other ways to get funding** 14 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 12 comments

*"Look at another area you can make savings in. Leave school transport alone."*

*"Keep as is! Look at other areas of the council!"*

*"Keep catchment, keep siblings together, cut costs elsewhere"*

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Look at other council cost reductions NOT children's needs!!!"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Reprocurement"*

**Other resident** 1 comments

*"Do not take it from children or education."*

**Parents should pay for transport to chosen school if not the nearest** 13 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

*"Ask all parents to pay for transport."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"make parents more responsible for getting their children to school."*

**Other resident** 9 comments

*"If parents want their child to go to another school then they could pay the extra, additional cost - if there may be a connecting school bus."*

*"Wherever possible, school transport should be provided, but seats paid for by parents. All parents."*

*"Yes if you need transport to a chosen school ie not the closest then you pay for it."*

**Sell seats on the bus** 12 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 4 comments

*"Token cost for ad-hoc users to 'pay as you go'"*

*"I would be happy to pay a contribution towards school transport to allow my child to attend the school with wish for them to get a place at regardless as to whether it is the nearest school"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Organise bus travel by catchment, but make this a paid option (an annual pass)."*

**Other resident** 5 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Selling available seats is a great way to help with costs and would keep the moms taking children in their cars down and would help reduce pollution issue and make to roads clearer enabling other users an easier journey with less traffic jams to contend with again bringing down pollution issues."*

*"Charge a nominal amount for each child to use the service, say enough to cover the cost of fuel for each journey"*

### **Funded car pooling** 11 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

*"Incentives for car pooling parents."*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Transport sharing between parents and residents could be positive if they were able to access funding this could help with transportig children for parents like myself that dont drive."*

#### **Other resident** 8 comments

*"Schools could look at parent carpooling - bringing families living in the same area together if they are interested so they can then discuss sharing costs etc outside of the school's responsibility"*

*"An easier option is to help parents to organise coordinated travel car pools and car shares where there are school drop off points and pick ups for example so a parent picks up kids ( that have been authorised by their parents at a school point and dropped off )"*

### **Sort 3 to 2 tier system** 11 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 7 comments

*"If the changes are being made to the 3 tier system in our area which they are from 2026 apparently then the school catchment needs to be decided first."*

*"Progress with changing the school system to two tier so you don't have to provide transport to both middle and upper school."*

*"Review the two tier system across all of central beds, revise the clusters and catchments and then decide on transport options"*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Fixing catchment areas first and converting from 3 to 2 tier first, before then rewriting HtS Transport Policy."*

#### **Other resident** 2 comments

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"Look at this again when the whole authority has a Primary/Secondary system"*

**Partial funding** 10 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 9 comments

*"Charge a small fee for the school buses. Say £300 a year per child across the county."*

*"consider partial funding for catchment but not nearest school"*

*"Possible termly contribution towards transport but should be means tested"*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 0 comments

**Other resident** 1 comment

*"Contribution levels for families depending on circumstances would assist"*

**Electric buses** 9 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"Invest in a bus company that uses electric - good for reducing the carbon footprint and also cheaper running costs."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Get electric buses"*

**Other resident** 4 comments

*"Use electric vehicles - the technology is now mature enough."*

*"Yes. As stated earlier, get the bus operators to convert ( gradually over time ) their fleets to zero emission BEVs. This will reduce costs for everyone and lead to real pollution reduction."*

**Look at sorting out SEND provision to find savings** 8 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

*"It would seem that £11m is spent on SEND transport each year, can the routes be optimised here?"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"More in-house transport for SEND, this has got to be cheaper than private hire."*

### **Other resident** 4 comments

*"Sort out your SEND provision and the transport costs would reduce."*

*"Yes why can't taxi home to school for special needs be reviewed. Why can't they share taxis or a shared bus instead of individual taxis per house. The big question is why can't their parents take their own children to school and pick up."*

### **Should get free transport to catchment** 8 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 6 comments

*"Provide transport for catchment area schools only. This still reduces spend."*

*"Given that children have to remain in education till 18 should you not be looking at free bus to school for the 16-18 age group rather than cutting back."*

*"Could parents of catchment schools get free travel but their child would need to catch the bus at the stop which is close to their home but closer to the catchment school as opposed to the nearest school. This would mean all children would be taking the closest journey at the lowest cost and would this be fairer?"*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Continued free bus to Sandy Secondary school for Potton schools are per currently."*

#### **Other resident** 1 comment

*"Continued free bus to Sandy Secondary school for Potton schools are per currently."*

### **Leave as is/ don't do it** 7 comments received

#### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 4 comments

*"You want kids to attend school leave it how it is."*

*"Carry on as we have been especially in small villages - importance is that children have the opportunity to go to a school that is best suited for them rather than a school slightly closer"*

#### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"No. Central Bedfordshire Council need to stick to the basic principles of why school transport is provided in the first place. To get students to school safely."*

**Other resident** 1 comment

*"It should not be changed"*

**Smaller vehicles** 6 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 2 comments

*"Use appropriate size buses for the amount of children on board. Eg, my daughter's bus is "coach" but there are only 15 children who get on, so a smaller mini bus would be better."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Smaller buses as I see half empty buses every day."*

**Other resident** 2 comments

*"use of smaller vehicles, eg mini buses."*

**Cut/stop cllr allowances** 6 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"I'd also like to see the scrapping of Councillor expenses being permitted to be claimed on top of an allowance."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"Reduce the salaries of councillors"*

**Other resident** 2 comments

*"reduce bureaucracy and councillor benefits"*

**Scrap all funded school transport** 6 comments received

**Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 1 comment

*"Stop all school transport unless to a special school."*

**Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Remove free school transport"*

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

### **Other resident** 3 comments

*"Why provide transport at a cost to the council at all? It was once the responsibility of parents or carers to take their child to school. Why should the council tax have to fund this? If it is offered at all, parents should be charged for their child to use the service."*

*"Make parents pay for school transport"*

### **School/CBC having their own buses** 6 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 5 comments

*"School bus."*

*"Yes. Maybe the council should operate in the same way as the states. Rung it own bus service. Theses children are our future"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 1 comment

*"What about using the Council vehicles or making academies use their buses? Savings can be made without creating uncertainty for our children"*

### **Other resident** 0 comments

### **Raise taxes** 5 comments received

### **Parent/Carers using HTST or prospective future users and SEND** 3 comments

*"I sympathise that budgets are tight and believe we should be paying more tax."*

*"increase taxes"*

### **Parent/Carers not accessing HTST** 2 comments

*"Increase council tax by a small amount to cover these costs."*

### **Other resident** 0 comments

## **Appendix iv: written letter consultation submissions**

We received emailed letter from the following

- Pyramid Schools Trust
- Sandy Secondary School x2
- Email from Cllr Mark Versallion
- Email from Cllr James Jamieson
- Cllr Susan Clinch, Cllr Mark Smith, Cllr Gary Summerfield
- Harlington Lower School and Sundon Lower School
- Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)
- Marston Moreteyne Parish Council

The letters have been included below

### **1) Letter from the Pyramid Schools Trust**

11 June 2025 To whom it may concern School Transport Consultation Response We write on behalf of the Board of Pyramid Schools Trust (PST), which consists of Harlington Upper, Arnold Academy, Parkfields Middle, Brooklands Middle, Beecroft Academy, Ramsey Manor Lower, Westoning Lower, Sundon Lower, and Harlington Lower Schools, in relation to the CBC consultation on school transport arrangements.

We wish to register our serious concerns regarding the proposed removal of the provision of transport from 'catchment' school to 'nearest' school. First and foremost, we are deeply concerned that this proposal is being presented to the council less than a year after it was roundly rejected. As far as we can assess, the proposal is exactly the same as last year and presents all the same flaws and inaccuracies. We are incredibly frustrated that so much officer and council time, as well as money, is being spent on something that should not even be considered at this time.

As with twelve months ago, the consequences of the adoption of this policy would create a serious threat to a number of schools within our Trust and, indeed, other schools in the authority.

Using the data from your own impact assessment, we estimate the potential reduction in pupils at our schools, and therefore funding (at today's levels) to be:

<b>School</b>	<b>Potential Pupil Loss</b>	<b>Potential Funding Loss p/a</b>
Arnold Academy	120	£876,000
Parkfields Middle	14	£102,000
Harlington Upper	192	£1,142,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>£2,398,800</b>

The impact of such a reduction in numbers would be catastrophic. We note that many other schools would be similarly affected. For example: Robert Bloomfield would lose 171 pupils, Samuel Whitbread would lose 181 pupils and Sandy Secondary School would lose 187 pupils. There are numerous other examples of schools that would see a reduction in pupil numbers.

Furthermore, the impact assessment itself is fundamentally flawed and incomplete as it fails to consider or acknowledge the issues that would arise for the schools suddenly having a massive influx of pupils. Could Woodland house an additional 100 students? Could Redborne find space for 111? Will Edward Peake cope with 207 more pupils? Not only would these schools struggle to physically accommodate these children, they would also suffer the serious consequences of 'lagged funding', meaning they would receive no money for the additional pupils for at least a year after they arrive. Furthermore, no consideration has been given to the additional costs that will be incurred for schools that will be over capacity. Will CBC fund capital projects in these schools or will additional buses have to be provided to the second or third nearest schools? Given the above, it is clear the CBC impact assessment is misleading, incomplete and inaccurate. Moreover, additional buses and taxis will be needed and, therefore, higher costs incurred for the 2025-2026 academic year as this policy will apply immediately to in-year transfers. This means, for example, that an upper school aged pupil moving into Silsoe in the next academic year, will need to be provided with a taxi to Redborne Upper School, as it is the nearest school. In the meantime, buses will be driving to Harlington Upper School every day from Silsoe!

We must also draw attention to the fact that almost two thirds of the school transport budget is currently spent on pupils with SEND. Historic poor strategy and leadership at local authority level has led to this disgraceful situation, yet families, schools and communities are being punished for it today. We accept that SEND is a national issue and the present situation is not necessarily the fault of current

officers or councillors, but it must be acknowledged that this is a far more pressing issue and, if addressed correctly as part of a joined-up education strategy, would undoubtedly reduce costs and improve the offer for children with SEND.

Given the previous points (the lack of impact assessment on schools that will increase in pupil numbers and the continuation of the grossly inefficient SEND transport costs), we would contend there is a very real chance that this policy change would not deliver the suggested cost savings and would also put more traffic on the roads, with all the ensuing environmental impacts. For at least the next four years, buses and taxis will have to run to more schools (not less) from the same localities, due to the legacy students continuing to attend the school they started under the current policy. Moreover, additional buses will be required indefinitely to transport pupils to second and third choice schools, as many schools will simply not have the capacity to house the additional students these new catchment areas will create.

In addition to the financial impacts, the proposed change would clearly have a significant negative effect on pupil outcomes. Schools within PST and all other schools in the cluster have worked in close collaboration over many years to foster relationships and develop common curriculum and assessment frameworks, minimising learning loss at transition points. Indeed, the Pyramid Schools Trust was formed with the primary intention of improving outcomes and opportunities for pupils in our locality.

There are numerous other flaws in this proposal, such as the potential cost to parents of paying for transport to schools that has previously been provided for free; the very real issue of families being split with siblings forced to attend different schools; the huge amount of uncertainty parents will face when applying for school places and, importantly, the impact on pupil wellbeing caused by children being forced to attend different schools to their friends at the point of transition. A final, but significant, concern is the nature of the consultation itself. The wording of the questions in the online document is massively biased and incredibly leading, with the clear intent of gaining the responses CBC wants, rather than objectively informed replies. For example, the question, 'How far do you agree or disagree with the Council looking to manage and reduce costs on mainstream home to school transport?' is only ever going to get a positive response. Who is going to ever say they do not want the Council to reduce costs? The wording of many of the questions is similarly leading. Furthermore, until pressure was applied, there was no intention to hold a public consultation event in the Harlington area whatsoever. This was a clear strategy to deny those who would be most affected by the proposed changes an opportunity to gain more information or air their views.

Ultimately, the proposed change will not deliver the suggested cost savings to CBC; it will cause major educational and emotional disruption to children and families; it will incur additional costs on parents and will have a devastating impact on many schools. CBC must urgently reconsider the proposed changes to the policy and review it again as part of a joined-up education strategy that incorporates school system reorganisation, SEND and school transport. We ask for our letter to be shared with council members and given due consideration prior to any decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Steve Kelly Chief Executive Officer

Owen Flack Chair of Trustees

## **2) Letter from Sandy Secondary School**

Dear Councillor Zerny and Councillor Owen

Subject: Objection to Proposed Changes in Home to School Transport Policy

I am writing to formally object to the proposed changes to the home school transport provision for Sandy Secondary School. These changes raise significant concerns about their impact on the school's capacity, parental choice, and support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Not to mention school budgets.

Firstly, the proposed removal of at least three double-decker buses and one coach appears to directly contradict the substantial investment made to expand the school's capacity. This investment was aimed at accommodating more students, yet the reduction in transport services undermines this objective. A diminished transport offer may dissuade prospective families from choosing Sandy Secondary School, particularly those from areas without viable alternative transport options.

Secondly, these changes erode parental choice. Families select our school for its high standards of education and inclusive ethos. By limiting access to school transport, many parents may find it logistically or financially unfeasible to send their children here, effectively restricting their ability to make decisions in their children's best interests.

Finally, the proposed changes pose a significant challenge to SEND students who rely on the school's tailored provision. Sandy Secondary School has a reputation for

its exceptional support for SEND students, which will only strengthen with the proposed Communication and Language (C&L) provision. However, these transport changes risk disproportionately affecting these students, many of whom depend on reliable school transport as part of their daily routine. For these families, the impact of the changes could be profound, potentially undermining the accessibility and inclusivity of the school.

I urge you to reconsider these proposals, taking into account the broader implications for the school community, parental choice, and the equitable treatment of SEND students. I am confident that a solution can be found that maintains the integrity of our school's mission while addressing any logistical or financial challenges needed at the local authority.

We would also like to note that representatives from our organisation attended the public webinar on the consultation. Regrettably, the responses provided to our questions during the session were unsatisfactory, as was the responses to the other school's questions. In particular, the repeated suggestion that we should "state that in your response" failed to engage meaningfully with the concerns we raised. Given that this was an open meeting designed for discussion, it was entirely reasonable to expect some form of substantive reply. The lack of engagement at this stage gives the strong impression that the organisers were unprepared to address the potential implications of the consultation's outcomes and had already made the judgement as to the results consultation.

We are extremely disappointed that this is the third time this consultation has been placed in the public domain in a very short time and the upset and feeling of uncertainty it creates, is not necessary. It brings wider challenges you have not thought of, like the impact on recruitment and retention in schools, where pupil numbers may now be reduced and job insecurity and redundancies, could be widespread across the county. The county is already behind in achievement and progress, money needed to spend on delivering quality education and driving up attainment by schools, a key priority for the local authority, is now being threatened by reducing the financial stream schools depend on, through student numbers. It could also create unhealthy competition between schools and reduce good practice of collaboration. Please reconsider the impact of this decision.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and am happy to discuss these concerns further if required.

Yours faithfully Miss Karen Hayward Executive Principal

### 3) Letter from Sandy Secondary School

Dear Councillors Zerny and Mackey

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Home-to-School Transport Policy

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of Governors at Sandy Secondary School, to express serious concerns regarding the current consultation on changes to Central Bedfordshire Council's home-to-school transport policy.

While we recognise the importance of regularly reviewing local authority policies to ensure they remain effective and sustainable, the proposed amendments—specifically the shift to providing transport solely to a student's nearest school—would have significant, adverse consequences for our school and wider community.

As you are aware, Sandy Secondary School has recently undergone a substantial £16 million redevelopment, supported in part by Central Bedfordshire Council. This investment has expanded our capacity to an eight-form entry and substantially enhanced the quality of our learning environment. It was made with a long-term vision for growth and improved educational outcomes for students.

The proposed changes, however, appear counterproductive to this vision and would have the following key impacts:

1. **Reduction in Student Access and Choice:** A significant number of students who would otherwise be eligible for free transport would lose this support. This not only undermines parental choice, but also disproportionately impacts families with limited financial means, who may be unable to afford private transport options.
2. **Risk to Enrolment and Funding:** Any resulting decline in student numbers will directly affect our funding, which is allocated on a per-pupil basis. A drop in enrolment could push the school into financial deficit, potentially leading to staff redundancies—costs which would, as a maintained school, fall back to the local authority.
3. **Undermining Inclusivity and Equity:** Students from rural or lower-income households would be disproportionately affected by the policy change, reducing the inclusiveness that Sandy Secondary School is committed to—and that we hope the Council equally values.

We believe these unintended consequences should prompt a reconsideration of the proposed changes. We urge you to take into account the strategic importance of maintaining equitable access to Sandy Secondary School, particularly in light of the substantial investment already made to support its growth and success.

The Governing Body will be submitting a detailed formal response to the consultation, articulating these concerns in full. However, we also wanted to ensure that key decision-makers such as yourselves are personally aware of the likely impact on local children, families, and educational outcomes.

We respectfully ask for your support in ensuring that any revisions to the transport policy reflect not only financial prudence but also fairness, inclusivity, and a commitment to the long-term success of our schools.

Yours sincerely Mr Tim Gardiner Chair of Governors

#### **4) Letter from Cllr Versallion**

Dear Su,

I have submitted my comments via the CBC consultation web page but as it was mostly tick boxes I want to ensure you have my four free text reasons for objecting to the change.

I've copied in my group colleagues who were able to attend the SusComs committee that considered this last week.

I will be at 5th August Exec to talk to it.

#### **FOUR REASONS TO REJECT PROPOSAL**

- We have a 3 tier system and complicated historical catchments that need to be adjusted first, as well as schools converted to 2 tier first, before school transport policy could be changed.
- Children from one village could end up going to two different schools in the opposite direction to each other - as it will be based on straight line distance to nearest school - breaking up friendship groups of children and community cohesion.
- Feeder links from lower to middle to upper schools will be broken, disrupting educational progress and collaborative work between schools, as well as breaking up friendship groups.

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- Younger siblings will not be guaranteed transport to attend the same school as their older siblings, if it's not the nearest school.

The same reasons my children's scrutiny committee rejected it last summer are I'm afraid the same reasons for rejecting this summer too.

Thank you,

**Mark**

### **5) Letter from Cllr Jamieson**

I have filled out the consultation, which unfortunately does not allow proper feedback of the issues and has a series of tick boxes seeking to get the answer officers want rather than a genuine consultation

It is deeply frustrating to see this consultation come forward again without addressing the issues that many councillors have previously raised. In particular

- The analysis is poor, with many of the proposed saving will not be achieved as either alternate school do not have a safe walking route and/or the proposed school does not have capacity
- It risks destabilising a number of schools, which would lead to a temporary reduction in pupils
- It does not take account of new housing developments
- It will cause unnecessary stress for pupils and parents and leave many with a confused picture of which school they should apply to

It was previously agreed that this should be done as part of a broader strategic plan to improve safe routes to school, school reorganisation and also looking at SEND provision

By way of example I look at schools in my ward

Flitton&Greenfield

Understand the two pupils receiving transport it is the nearest school as Pulloxhill is now closed

Arnold Academy – Analysis shows there are 121 pupils receiving transport for whom this is not the nearest school. The assumption that transport would not be needed if the pupils were to go to their nearest school. Understand a number of these are from Westoning and Flitton/Greenfield. For whom the nearest school would be Woodlands. However there are two issues that make this change impractical without further changes

- There are too few places in Woodlands to take all 121 pupils – appreciate that current pupils will not be impacted but take the assumption similar numbers in the future
- There is no safe route to Woodlands for pupils to walk from both Flitton/Greenfield and also from Westoning even though distance is less than 3 miles

Harlington Upper – Analysis shows 197 pupils whom have a closer school. However a number of these, the nearest school would be Redbourne, question whether Redbourn has sufficient places ? There is also the issue of the safety of the route from Westoing and Flitton/Greenfield.

James

**Councillor James Jamieson**

## **6) Joint ward councillor submission**

**Joint Ward Councillor Response to Consultation on Home to School Transport**

**Cllr Susan Clinch, Cllr Mark Smith, Cllr Gary Summerfield**

**19<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

**Ampthill Ward, representing Ampthill, Clophill, Maulden and Millbrook**

Our comments below arise from conversations and meetings during the consultation period and over a number years with Clophill Parish Council and individual residents affected by both the existing HTST arrangements based on catchment, and who will be affected by the proposed changes.

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

We wish to give context to our comments by acknowledging, as explained in the HTST consultation papers:

1. That CBC needs to reduce expenditure on HTST.
2. That CBC policies should be fairly and consistently applied, with consideration to special circumstances, such as where children qualify for travel assistance.
3. That parents remain free to choose the appropriate school for their children, understanding that transport to this school will not be provided by or funded by CBC, unless the choice is for the nearest school.

However, we also wish to put into consideration:

1. CBC's School Organisation Planning Principles shown below, notably Principles 1,2 and 6:

Principle 1	The need to provide local schools for local children, ensuring a sense of community belonging and also promoting sustainable modes of travel
Principle 2	The need to create schools that are of sufficient size to be financially and educationally viable
Principle 3	The ability to support the expansion of local popular and successful schools or to link expanding schools with popular and successful schools
Principle 4	The potential to further promote and support robust partnerships and learning communities
Principle 5	To seek opportunities to create inspirational learning environments for the school and to maximise community use
Principle 6	To promote the diversity of provision offered in Central Bedfordshire to increase opportunities for parental choice
Principle 7	To support vulnerable learners in area special schools and integrate appropriate Special Educational Needs provision within mainstream schools

We see elements of this in conflict with the HTST proposals, specifically in community impacts on Clophill, risk to the viability of Clophill St. Mary's VC Lower School ( and other schools in Central Bedfordshire, notably Harlington Upper School) and generally that "diversity of provision to increase opportunities for parental choice" is not compatible with only funding transport to the nearest school.

2. The content of the School Organisation Planning Member Briefings carried out in Nov/Dec 2024 especially in relation to calculations on School PAN and NOR and projections of future changes in pupil numbers due to area birth rates and housing development. The change in policy will have significant effects on the School Organisation Plan forward planning which have not been considered, and this will have cost implications which need to be set against HTST savings.
3. The accuracy of projected savings from the proposal, as 3 to 2 tier transition is not factored in.
4. The actual population distribution of Central Bedfordshire especially with the large areas of rural landscape and smaller communities where most or all children will qualify for school transport and therefore are all impacted by nearest or catchment eligibility for funding. This compares to urban centres where most children will be within the 2-to-3-mile walking distance threshold of one or more suitable schools.

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

5. The distribution of schools in Central Bedfordshire, with the policy change impacting some educational establishments more than others, where they are serving a more dispersed population. Catchments have been defined in the past to make allowances for population distribution, similarly to equalising population numbers for electoral wards, to ensure that “schools are of sufficient size to be financially and educationally viable” (Principle 2 above).
6. CBC’s Policy for Travel Assistance for Children and Young People dated April 2025, which states that CBC has a statutory obligation to provide funded school transport for a child from a low income family, aged between 11 and 16 years attending one of their **three nearest qualifying schools** where they live between 2 and 6 miles from their school. This means that for every community reliant on school transport with the nearest secondary school more than 2 miles away, CBC will need to retain the flexibility to transport children of secondary school age to the 3 nearest qualifying schools up to 6 miles away. This may make it more economically sound to preserve viable school transport routes in some communities by extending choice.

As Ward Councillors, we have specifically been asked to represent the concerns of the residents of the village of Clophill about the impact of the proposed change to nearest school only for funded transport.

### **Current situation for Clophill.**

Clophill, population 1823 by 2021 census, is served by a single lower school St. Mary’s VC Lower. All middle and upper age school students in Clophill live beyond the 2 mile and 3 mile safe walking distance threshold from any suitable school. The village is currently considered to fall within the Shefford Schools cluster and the entire village is within Robert Bloomfield Middle School catchment and is considered a feeder school for Robert Bloomfield.

At Upper School transition, the village is split between Harlington Upper School and Samuel Whitbread Academy. Over a period of years this has created difficulties for Clophill families as Robert Bloomfield primarily feeds into Samuel Whitbread and Harlington Upper takes its school population primarily from Arnold Middle School. Clophill parents within Harlington Catchment are therefore faced with the burden of paying for transport to Samuel Whitbread, which does currently have a viable public transport link from Clophill and a school bus route through the village, to allow children to proceed through transition with their peers, or accepting this out of community transition - which is not a judgement on provision at Harlington Upper but an acknowledgement that Harlington is not otherwise a location with community affiliation with Clophill.

This is not a satisfactory situation, with neighbouring houses eligible/not eligible for funded transport to Samuel Whitbread which is the first choice for progression for most parents.

### **Outcome of Proposed Changes on Clophill**

The nearest school transport funding model affects Clophill families in the following ways:

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

1. Clophill families are no longer eligible for funded transport to Harlington Upper. This will impact younger siblings of students currently using this transport but is not otherwise identified as an adverse outcome by families.
2. At lower-middle transition, Clophill is now split between Alameda Middle (1/3 of village) and Robert Bloomfield (2/3 of village) for funded transport. Clophill St Mary's VC Lower is very much a community school which is central to the identity of the village, and parents are very concerned that the friendship groups which support children through the transition period will not be maintained due to this split. Across Central Bedfordshire, very few lower schools serving a single community are affected in this way, and parents feel strongly that this disadvantages children at the point of transition but that this also affects the lower school experience for many children who are worried about being split up from friends. Parents can make a choice to keep friendship groups together but this will involve financial penalty for some families.
3. At middle – upper transition Clophill is split between Samuel Whitbread Academy and Redborne Upper School at a point halfway into the village. Some families with students attending Robert Bloomfield with funded transport are not entitled to funded transport to allow progression with peers to Samuel Whitbread, but would need to transfer to Redborne Upper to maintain their funding. These students are having to move away from their peers and into a situation where the majority of students are progressing with their peers. Some parents will choose to fund transport or drive to keep within the Shefford cluster transition if they believe their children will be disadvantaged by this.

### Why does this matter?

1. Compared with other communities where all levels of schooling are within safe walking distance, or where the funded transport offer allows whole community progression from primary to secondary or from lower through to upper school, Clophill is significantly disadvantaged. This means that the equal application of the nearest school only HTST funding policy impacts the community unfairly and this should be mitigated in the policy.
2. Community cohesion is affected adversely by this policy as the lower school is so central to village community life, with an expectation that children will move together through the education system and support each other and be part of village life with shared experiences. This continuity is important socially to parents as well. Many families in the village will need to balance their economics and working lives alongside their children's welfare through school transition whilst other communities are not under the same pressure to make those choices. (See Principle 1 of the School Organisation Plan)
3. Clophill families are very aware of the parking pressure experienced by Robert Bloomfield Middle School in Shefford and are concerned that the reduction in numbers of children from Clophill being entitled to funded transport will mean more parents have to drive children to school. This will add to those parking pressures and likely result in expensive parking control measures having to be adopted.

4. The St. Mary's Lower School PAN is 30 and there is currently a 17% surplus of places. School numbers could be adversely affected as parents choose lower schools based on assurance of progression with peers. The economic viability of the village school would be put at risk if village families choose early to opt for progression stability. This could include parents choosing to drive children to Maulden Lower School, which is already at capacity, as pupils there almost all progress to Alameda and Redborne in Ampthill.

### **What can be done?**

Ward Councillors, with Clophill residents, propose that Clophill, along with other communities split between "nearest school" funding zones, is assigned a special status within the HTST policy, so that the whole village/parish area, as served by Clophill Lower School, can choose between the two nearest middle and upper schools and qualify for free transport to either.

The costs of this to CBC will not be significant as

1. There is a cohort of 20 currently in Year 3 at St. Mary's Lower School with likely numbers of students "benefitting" from the choice of two funded transport schools being much lower.
2. The difference in distance between Samuel Whitbread/Redborne and Robert Bloomfield/Alameda is small so savings are minimal but additionally, route optimisation through the village, given the geography/road layout, should make comparable savings even with all children given a choice of both Shefford/Ampthill as funded destinations.
3. As heritage funded transport commitments, and the requirement to extended choice for lower income families, mean that transport will need to be provided in both directions for a number of years into the future, savings from rigid application of the new policy criteria will be minimal.

The most likely outcome from this exception is that the current pattern of progression to Robert Bloomfield continues with a small number of students continuing to be eligible for transport even though Alameda Middle is the nearest school. More students will likely continue that progression through to Samuel Whitbread than previously, rather than opting back into Redborne, but as the split was previously to Harlington which is further away and not on an optimisable route, savings will still be made.

As the School Organisation forecast indicates that Redborne reaches capacity from its immediate area, but that Samuel Whitbread is dependent on pupil opt-in from a much wider area, this outcome will correspond with current School Organisation planning

### **Conclusion:**

As Ward Councillors we find that the change in HTST policy from catchment to nearest school for funded transport has an undue and unfair impact on the community of Clophill and especially on families from Clophill with children attending St. Mary's VC Lower School. Whilst supporting the

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

principle of fair and consistent policy application, we believe there is a case for flexibility, adjustment and mitigation where the equal application of policy affects individuals, groups and communities adversely in comparison to others.

We understand the imperative to save money on HTST, but believe the current proposal's suggested savings need to be compared with costs related to the changes likely in School Organisation Planning, need for traffic management and actual route optimisation savings for specific communities.

For the village of Clophill, as a special case of adverse impact, we request that funded transport is offered for nearest and second nearest school at middle and upper level for the whole parish area. We believe the that cost implications of this are minimal, especially compared with cost of transport to Harlington Upper, and that this flexibility preserves parental choice whilst removing unfair burden on some parents and children in the village.

**Cllr Susan Clinch, Cllr Mark Smith, Cllr Gary Summerfield**

## **7) Harlington and Sundon Lower School**

To Whom It May Concern School Transport Consultation Response – Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools

I am writing as the Headteacher of Harlington Lower School and Sundon Lower School, and on behalf of the Local Governing Committee of Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools, to formally register our concerns regarding the proposed changes to the school transport arrangements. While I echo the broader points raised in a letter to you by the Pyramid Schools Trust, of which our schools are a proud part, I wish to highlight specific issues that directly impact our pupils, families, and the operational effectiveness of Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools.

My primary concern revolves around the profound fragmentation and disruption that these proposals, based on providing transport only to the nearest suitable school, will inflict upon our communities and the educational journey of our children.

Firstly, I observe from the map provided within the consultation documents that there are children currently within the Toddington St George's catchment area who, under the new 'nearest' school criteria, would reside closer to Harlington Lower School, and vice versa. Due to the proximity of the M1, many of these residences do not have a safe walking route to school and so more families may need to apply for school transport. This would increase the need for lower school transport, which is not currently provided, and thus would negate cost savings and introduce unforeseen complexities for families and the local authority.

Furthermore, the map illustrates that the village of Upper Sundon is cut in half by the proposed boundaries. Currently, Upper Sundon falls entirely within the catchment for Arnold Academy. However, under the new 'nearest' school policy, half of the village would be provided with transport to Parkfields Middle School. Similarly, Harlington village, currently within the Parkfields

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Middle School catchment, will also be bisected, with some residents now deemed closer to Arnold Academy.

This fragmentation has severe implications for Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools. We work closely with the middle schools to provide smooth and effective transition for our pupils, as well as common curriculum frameworks and shared pastoral approaches. Knowing that the majority of pupils from Harlington Lower School currently move to Parkfields Middle School, and Sundon Lower School to Arnold Academy, helps us to tailor our approaches and ensure a robust and smooth transition. Splitting both cohorts between the two middle schools significantly increases staff workload to ensure effective transitions to both schools as well as impacting on friendships and peer groups at a vital transitional stage. The impact on the mental wellbeing of our young pupils, who will likely find themselves transitioning to middle school without their established friendship groups, cannot be overstated. The emotional distress and social disruption at such a formative age are deeply concerning and directly counter to providing the 'best possible outcomes for our children'.

Finally, for pupils living in Upper Sundon, the situation at the upper school transition becomes even more fractured. Under the proposals, the village of Upper Sundon will be split three ways for transport to Upper School, depending on which upper school is now considered 'nearest.'

In conclusion, while I appreciate the stated need to manage and reduce costs in school transport, these proposals are deeply flawed and demonstrate a lack of understanding of the practical realities and the human impact on our school communities. The arbitrary redrawing of boundaries, based solely on a 'nearest' metric, without considering existing community ties, safe routes, or the intricate web of feeder school relationships, will lead to significant educational, emotional, and logistical challenges. It will undermine years of collaborative work aimed at improving pupil outcomes and wellbeing. The consultation states an aim to 'bring them in line with Department for Education guidance and neighbouring councils,' yet it fails to adequately address the critical local consequences of such alignment.

I urge the council to reconsider these proposed changes and to engage in a genuine consultation process that prioritises the educational and emotional needs of our children and respects the integrity of our communities. This policy will not deliver the promised cost savings in the long term, and the human cost will be immeasurable.

**Yours sincerely, Victoria Blunt Executive Headteacher Harlington Lower School & Sundon Lower School**

**Tim Kingham Chair of Governors**

**On behalf of the Local Governing Committee of Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools**

### **8) Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)**

Central Bedfordshire Council Date: 29/06/2025 Dear Sirs, Bedfordshire Schools Trust – Response to CBC Home-to-School Transport Consultation We write on behalf of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST), which includes the following schools in Central Bedfordshire: Samuel Whitbread

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

Academy (SWA), Etonbury Academy, Pix Brook Academy, Robert Bloomfield Academy (RBA), Langford Village Academy (LVA), Lawnside Academy, St Christophers Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Campton Academy, and Gravenhurst Academy.

We wish to register our opposition and serious concerns to the proposed changes to Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) Home-to-School Transport (HTST) policy – specifically the removal of free transport to catchment schools in favour of providing it only to the nearest school by distance.

We note that this proposal is being presented to CBC less than a year after it was previously rejected. The proposal remains unchanged and retains the same flaws as those raised last time. We are concerned that significant officer time and financial resources are being directed toward a proposal which, according to available evidence, may not deliver any meaningful savings for CBC.

As with twelve months ago, the consequences of adopting this policy would create a serious threat to two schools within BEST – RBA and SWA – and other schools within the local authority. Using data from CBC's own impact assessment, we estimate the financial impact on both schools would be severe, potentially creating instability. In the case of SWA, this could impact the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) agreement, for which CBC remains responsible for. This scale of funding loss will lead to:

- Reduced curriculum options
- Threats to sixth form provision and enrichment
- Staffing reductions, causing instability and impacting the education of children
- Undermining progress made in recent years in student outcomes

**Correspondence with Officers** We have engaged with Council Officers and attended two of CBC's consultation events where we sought clarification on a number of implementation concerns. From the consultation meetings and discussions with Officers, they confirmed the following:

- CBC's admissions service would not place a pupil into a 2-tier school if they live in a 3- tier area and attend 3-tier provision. When pupils transition to their next school (e.g., from middle to upper), CBC will offer them a place in their nearest 3-tier school. This is defined as an 'LA placement' and may qualify for transport assistance depending on distance (over 3 miles) and/or whether there is a safe walking route.
- If a child is eligible for transport but their nearest school is full, CBC will offer transport to the next nearest school with appropriate phase provision and will respect the Published Admission Number (PAN).
- CBC will apply its "Safer Routes to School" guidance when assessing eligibility under the 3-mile policy. We requested clarification regarding which specific routes are deemed unsafe, particularly given that many villages are located across the A507.

Is our interpretation of these statements correct?

Key Concerns

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

1. Mixed-Tier School System Complicates Policy Delivery CBC remains one of the few authorities still operating a mixed two- and three-tier system. This is not incidental – the Council made a deliberate decision to halt full reorganisation in the Shefford and Stotfold cluster. This mixed system presents significant operational challenges under the proposed policy. For example:

- In Meppershall, pupils attend Henlow Academy from Year 5 as the local lower school does not provide for Years 5 and 6. According to Officers, these pupils would continue to receive transport to Henlow, even though RBA is less than half the distance away. This is further complicated by the fact that buses from Gravenhurst already collect pupils in Meppershall as they travel through the village on the way to RBA.
- Most families in Clophill currently follow an established feeder route: RBA from Year 5, followed by SWA from Year 9. Under the proposal, families in west Clophill (near the A6) would receive transport to Alameda Middle School and Redborne Upper School & Community College, while families in east Clophill (including recent housing developments) would retain access to RBA and SWA. Splitting villages like Clophill divides communities and risks duplicating bus provision, which would not deliver financial efficiencies.

## 2. Catastrophic Impact on Pupil Numbers and School Budgets

CBC's own modelling shows that the proposed changes would severely reduce pupil numbers at RBA and SWA, along with broader risks to the stability of other schools. The impact would include job losses, narrowing of curriculum offers, and challenges in sustaining sixth forms – all of which directly affect the quality of education.

3. No Plan for Receiving Schools The proposal assumes displaced pupils can be absorbed by their 'nearest' schools — but provides no evidence that these schools have capacity. Schools receiving additional pupils are unlikely to have:

- The physical infrastructure (classrooms, facilities)
- Staffing capacity to meet demand
- Additional budget (due to lagged funding model, with no extra funds until the following academic year)

This is destabilising for both schools and parents because the implementation of the policy is not currently clear.

4. Disruption to Families and Sibling Cohesion The proposed policy creates a real risk of siblings attending different schools. For instance:

- A family in Clophill has an older child at RBA (Year 7), due to transition to SWA in Year 9. Their younger sibling (now in Year 4) may be directed to Alameda Middle School and Redborne Upper School & Community College instead, simply because they are marginally closer by distance.

This could result in:

- Negative emotional impact on children separated from siblings and friends
- Different school calendars and start times
- Restricted access to afterschool clubs or activities
- Logistical complexity and cost for working parents who might find that they need to be in two places at once. The emotional impact on children separated from siblings and friends is

## Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

substantial. Expecting families to navigate daily routines across different schools and towns is unreasonable for many given the distance between some schools.

### 5. Undermining of Parental Choice

Parental choice is a cornerstone of the English education system — empowering families to select schools that best meet their child’s needs and where they will maximise their potential. The proposed policy undermines this principle by tying transport eligibility solely to the ‘nearest’ school. This approach removes meaningful choice and imposes rigid, one-size-fitsall criteria on families. It shifts the burden of flexibility from the system onto parents — with no clear educational benefit in return.

### 6. Increased Costs – Not Savings We question the financial assumptions underpinning this proposal:

- Larger buses serving clear catchment areas are more cost-effective.
- Pupils from the same village will require more buses if the nearest school measurement splits the village. This will increase cost regardless of vehicle size.
- Legacy sibling arrangements and mid-year transfers will necessitate additional transport routes thus increasing costs.

In reality, CBC may end up funding more bespoke journeys, undermining its projected savings target.

### 7. Disproportionate Impact on Disadvantaged Families

The families most affected will be those on low incomes and those with pupils who receive free school meals or have SEND. These families may not be able to afford to send their children to their current schools without transport support. This risks widening the educational attainment gap – contrary to CBC’s strategic priorities.

### A Targeted, Local Solution is Essential

While we recognise the intent to align with Department for Education guidance, that guidance is not mandatory — and is better suited to urban areas than to rural communities such as ours. By pausing full transition to a two-tier system, CBC has created a uniquely complex education landscape. Parents are managing a mix of school types, legacy feeder systems, and confusing eligibility criteria. A blanket “nearest school” rule, particularly one that splits communities, is not fit for purpose in this context.

We urge CBC to create a targeted transport solution for RBA and SWA that:

- Respects local school phases and feeder patterns
- Reflects community geography
- Preserves continuity for families If the current proposals proceed unchanged, they will:
- Split families and communities

Home to School Transport: Catchment to nearest change proposal 2025

- Disrupt high-performing, viable schools
- Disproportionately harm disadvantaged and rural pupils
- Risk increasing transport costs rather than reducing them We request that this response be shared in full with elected members and that the views of local schools, families, and communities be given appropriate weight in decision-making.

Yours faithfully, Dr Alan Lee Ilona Bond Chief Executive Officer & Chair of Trust Board National Leader of Education On behalf of the Board of Trustees Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)

## **9) Marston Moreteyne Parish Council**

Home to School Transport Consultation – Response from Marston Moreteyne Parish Council

Marston Moreteyne is a large village with children utilizing local authority school transport services within both Central Bedfordshire and the neighbouring Bedford Borough. The Parish Council has reviewed the consultation materials in detail and wishes to respond as follows:

- The consultation maps lack sufficient clarity, making it difficult for the Parish Council to determine how boundary lines impact the village, and which parts are designated for which Middle, Secondary, or Upper schools. As a result, it is not possible to make a clear or informed assessment.
- The main consultation documents do not adequately explain how the proposed changes would affect parents and carers or the potential implications for their children. More detailed and accessible information is required to enable a full understanding of the impact.
- The Parish Council remains unconvinced that the projected financial savings are accurate. There is concern that some schools may experience reduced student numbers, leading to a loss of essential funding, and that the transition process may become more complex. This raises serious questions about the proposal's overall viability.
- There is concern regarding the potential negative impact on children's mental health, particularly as the changes may result in separation from their established peer groups.
- The Council is also concerned that dividing the parish into two separate educational catchment areas could create social divisions, potentially giving rise to a 'gang' culture within the community.

**Yours faithfully Mrs H. Trustam Parish Clerk**

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Call:** 0300 300 8000

**Email:** [customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ