

# **Schools for the Future – Biggleswade and surrounding area**

Consultation results

By

**Joanna Lang**

Senior Consultation Officer

Community Intelligence

Communications, Insight and Engagement

# 1. Executive Summary

## Purpose of consultation

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live and work. That's why we expect the number of local residents and homes to grow in the coming years. Across our area, some 43,000 new homes are expected to be built by 2035 and that means a lot more school places will be needed.

Because of the changes, our local schools have been working together, with Central Bedfordshire Council, on a long-term plan to make sure we have:

- the right schools
- in the right places
- delivering the best education

The Schools for the Future programme held a three-month public consultation on proposed changes to schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area.

The proposals and consultation were widely promoted to staff, Governors, parents and the wider community.

## The response

The consultation ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 until 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and 353 responses were received.

How they accessed the questionnaire:

- 196 (55%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the mobile version
- 123 (35%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through a pc/laptop
- 34 (10%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the tablet version

To make sense of the feedback received, we employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the headline quantitative measures, followed by coding of the free text comments into themes to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with the proposals. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

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

## Summary of Findings

### Feedback on direction of travel and proposed changes:

#### Developing a long-term plan

96% of respondents felt that it is either important or very important that the schools and council develop a long-term plan for school places

#### The move to a two-tier (primary/secondary) model of education

58% of respondents agreed with the move to a two-tier model of education

#### Importance of working together to coordinate change

87% of respondents felt it was important or very important that the schools in the area work together to coordinate change.

### Feedback on specific proposals

School	Proposal	Level of support
Biggleswade Academy (Middle deemed Primary)	Convert to a primary school	38% support
Caldecote CofE Academy (Lower)	Convert to a primary school	100% support
Lawnside Academy (Lower)	Convert to a primary school and relocate to current Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site	12% support
Northhill CofE VA Lower School	Convert to a primary school	80% support
St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - East	Convert to a primary school	83% support
St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - West	Convert to a primary school	85% support
Sutton CofE VA Lower School	Convert to a primary school	61% support
New Primary School (land east of Biggleswade)		20% support

Potton Lower School & Potton Middle School	Amalgamate and become a primary school	41% support
Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School	3 options: A – each to convert to a primary on their own site B – amalgamate on the Dunton site C – amalgamate and relocate to a site on land east of Biggleswade	31% agree the right factors were identified  91% support transition to primaries on their own sites
Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School	Convert to secondary school and move onto a new site on land east of Biggleswade	42% support
Stratton Upper School	Convert to a secondary school	73% support
Sixth Form provision	One sixth form for the area	63% support

## Conclusion

There is strong support for the long term plan (96% support), and strong support for the schools to work together to co-ordinate change (87%), however respondents are split on their support for the proposed move to two-tier schooling (58% support). Initial comments identified the need to keep education in the community and retain village schools, as well as the need to focus on the child and their education.

Support across the proposals for the individual schools was particularly varied. The schools which were most supported for their proposals were Caldecote CofE Academy, St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West, St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East and Northill CofE VA Lower School, all of which received 80%+ support.

## Biggleswade Academy

The proposal for Biggleswade Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 840 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 1010 pupils.

52% of respondents disagreed with the proposal for Biggleswade Academy – but comments indicated that they felt the school was more suited to being an all-through school (2-18 years old). Comments throughout the questionnaire also stated that the school is rated as good, and it is felt that Biggleswade Academy would be losing out in the switch to two-tier, to other schools that are rated as requiring improvement.

### **Caldecote CofE Academy**

The proposal for Caldecote CofE Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 168 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 120 pupils.

Caldecote CofE Academy had 100% support, but only a few responses. The comments received demonstrated issues about the need for transport to access the school from Biggleswade.

### **Lawnside Academy**

The proposal for Lawnside Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 420 pupils, and scope to grow once relocated to the vacated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site. The current capacity at the school is 300 pupils.

The school is proposed to relocate to the current Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site which is 0.7 miles away from the current Lawnside Academy site.

Lawnside Academy saw 77% of respondents disagreeing with the proposal. Comments discussed the school's current Ofsted rating of requiring improvement, and whether or not it was a good idea for a school with that rating to increase its size.

### **Northhill CofE VA Lower School**

The proposal for Northhill CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.

Northhill CofE VA Lower School saw 80% of respondents supporting their proposal. The comments received were also supportive of the school converting to a primary school.

### **St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East**

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East received 83% support for the proposal. The comments received were varied, covering general support, and the need for improvements to facilities if the school becomes a primary.

### **St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West**

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West received 85% support for the proposal. Comments were varied, covering general support, and the need for improvements to facilities if the school becomes a primary.

### **Sutton CofE VA Lower School**

The proposal for Sutton CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.

Sutton CofE VA Lower School received 61% support for the proposal. The 2 comments received were very different – however there was an underlying theme about the need for the school to make financial sense.

### **New Primary School (land East of Biggleswade)**

The proposal for a new primary on the land east of Biggleswade is that it will have a maximum capacity of 420 pupils.

The new primary school on the land east of Biggleswade saw 52% of respondents against the proposal. 20% of respondents were supportive of the proposal. Comments were mainly about having multiple schools east of town. This theme reappears at low levels throughout the responses for other questions.

### **Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools**

The proposal for Potton Lower School and Potton Middle School is for them to amalgamate and become a primary school for 2022/23, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the lower school is 300 pupils, and current capacity at the middle school is 360 pupils.

The response for the proposal for Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools were split, with 41% supporting and 41% against. Only 1 comment was received, which was supportive of the proposal.

### **Dunton CofE VC Lower and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower Schools**

There are three options being considered for the future of Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower school:

Option A - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School transition to primaries on their current sites with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option B - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamating as a 1 form of entry (30 places a year) primary school on the Dunton Lower site with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option C - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamate and relocate as the new 2 form of entry (60 places a year) primary in the

brand-new school on land east of Biggleswade with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Dunton and Wrestlingworth saw the largest amount of responses per school in the consultation.

45% of respondents disagreed that the right factors were identified, citing that factors should include choice, sustainable transport and the ability to walk to school, being educated in your own community, the importance of schools in a rural community, Ofsted ratings of outstanding and the school's relationship with church.

91% of respondents want them to convert to primary schools on their own sites. Comments received reiterated comments seen above, the importance of the schools to their respective villages and how removing schools would turn them into dormitory or retirement villages. It would also remove choice for parents and for children that wanted or needed smaller schools or classes, the loss of two Ofsted outstanding schools, and the ability of being able to walk to school. There were some suggestions that Dunton and Wrestlingworth could be operated as a split site school – one site as an Infant school and one as a Junior school.

A separate consultation response was received from the Dunton and Wrestlingworth Church of England VC Lower Schools Federation citing that *“the Governing Body voted unanimously to support of Option A in the consultation, keeping both schools open and will be responding accordingly.”* The full response can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School**

The proposal for Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 900 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 840 pupils.

Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would move into the brand-new secondary school that will be built on land east of Biggleswade.

Respondents were split on the proposal for Edward Peake, with 42% supportive and 42% against. Comments were most likely to identify that a lot of money has been spent in recent years upgrading the current site, and it would be wasted to be converted to a primary as many facilities wouldn't be needed. Respondents also felt that the school should stay on its current site. There was also some support for the school to become a secondary school.

### **Stratton Upper School**

The proposal for Stratton Upper School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 1200 pupils (Years 7-11). The current capacity at the school is 990 pupils (Years 9-11).

73% of respondents supported the proposal for Stratton Upper School. There were comments detailing concern about the current reputation/Ofsted rating of the school. A letter from Stratton Community Farm CIC was also received in response to the consultation detailing their wish to *“create a care farm and horticultural space for Stratton students and Biggleswade residents”*.

### **Sixth form provision**

The proposal for sixth form provision is to create one sixth form for the area, open to pupils of both the existing Stratton Upper and Edward Peake schools. The sixth form would have a proposed capacity of 420 students (Years 12 and 13).

63% of respondents support the sixth form provision proposal. Comments were related to support of the proposal, as well as suggestions for multiple sites and to increase the offering – with some suggestions for more vocational options. There were also comments about Stratton as the current provider, that they have experience so should be able to run the sixth form for the area.

### **Overall comments**

For the overall comments, respondents were most likely to discuss the need to retain village schools (and the importance of the schools to the village communities), as well as supporting the plan for two-tier schooling.

There were also concerns raised about pupils and transitions/how it will work, and the importance of keeping parents up-to-date with the transition times.

### **Demographics of respondents**

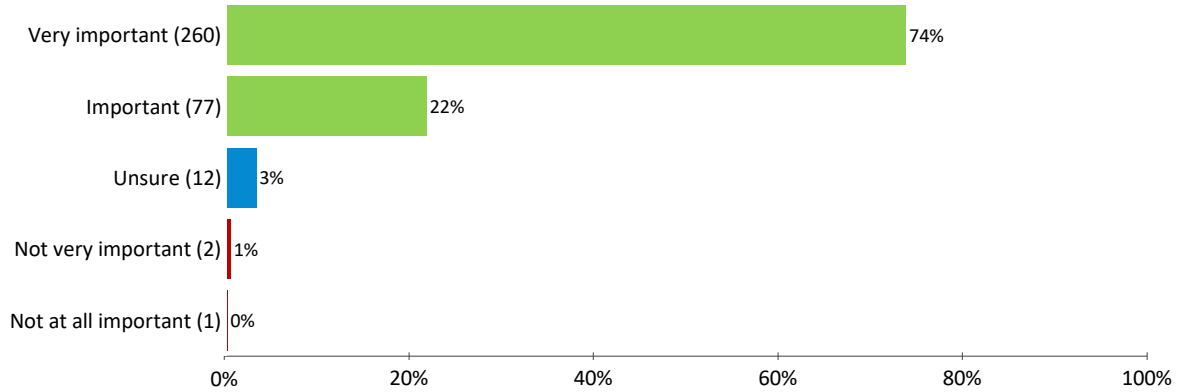
The demographics of respondents saw females, and those aged 30-44 over-represented. Ethnicity broadly followed the Central Bedfordshire figures, and those with disabilities were under-represented. Affluent Mosaic groups were over-represented, and deprived groups were under-represented.



# 1. Detailed analysis of findings

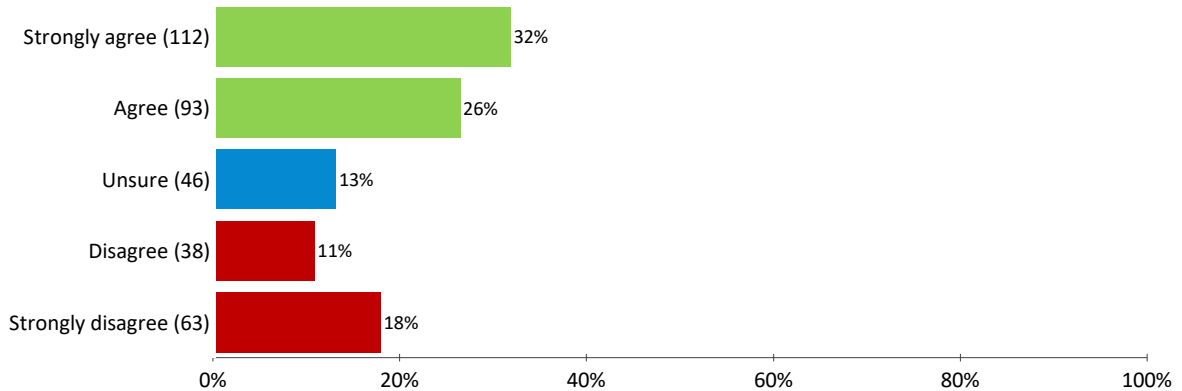
## The principles

How important is it for the schools and the council to develop a long-term plan for meeting the increased demand for new school places?



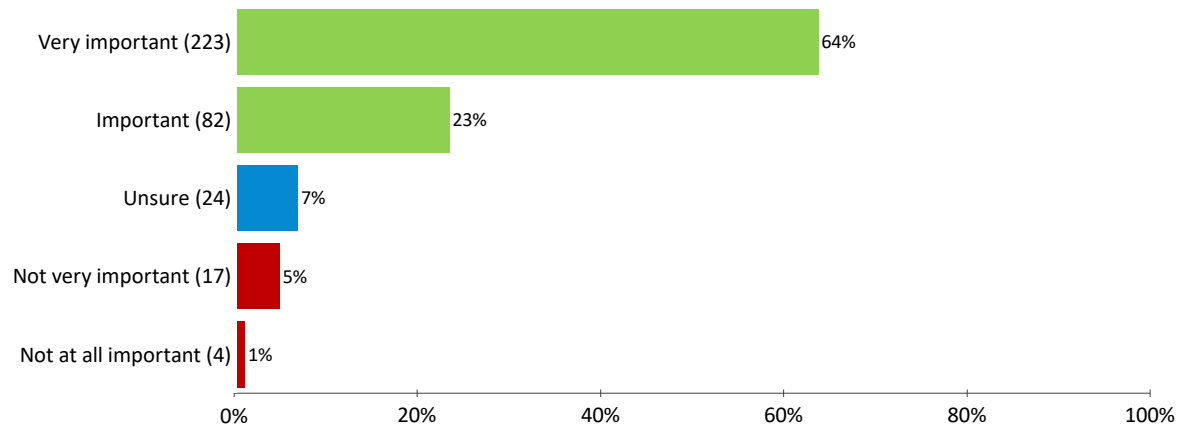
96% of respondents felt it was important or very important for the schools and the council to develop a long-term plan for meeting the increased demand for new school places.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to move the schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area to the two-tier (primary/secondary) model of education?



58% of respondents agree or strongly agreed with the proposal to move the schools in Biggleswade and the surrounding area to the two-tier model of education.

How important is it that the schools in the area work together to coordinate change across the locality?



87% of respondents felt it was important or very important for schools in the area to work together to coordinate change.

Respondents were asked if they would like to make comments about the approach we are taking. 140 chose to provide comments and they are summarised below. The main theme was around the need to retain village schools, and the importance of providing education in the community that the child lives in. There’s also a need to focus on the child and quality of education:

Theme	No. of comments
Keep village schools / education in their community	42
Focus on the child / education - not financials	28
Supportive of overall approach	24
Retain 3 tier system	15
The consultation process isn't transparent	13
Bigger schools aren't always better	12
The change should happen sooner / taking too long	6
Changes happening at different times cause confusion / disruption to education	5
Concern / comments that planning permission for the new school hasn't been approved yet	5
Edward Peake only just spent lots of money upgrading its site	5
It's good for Central Bedfordshire to use the same schooling system as other LA's	4

Langford Village Academy issues about being at capacity	3
Secondary school options aren't great	3
What about SEND provision?	3
Concerns about stability of staff in the two-tier switchover	2
Lawnside Academy shouldn't move to the Edward Peake site	2
Schools working together is important	2
Stratton Upper should be the sixth form provision	2
Other	14

Some examples of the comments received are:

### **Keep village schools / education in their community**

*"I think where possible, it would be good to keep the existing schools in wrestlingworth and dunton. Village schools are integral to some villages and why some parents choose to live in a particular place. Smaller class sizes allow for young children to get more support and guidance. Village schools are apart of our history and should be saved where possible."*

*"Village schools are key for children living in the village and for community. Please do not undervalue and close them"*

*"I don't know much about the rationale behind the strategy or the detailed approach. However, as someone who works closely with schools of all sizes across many counties and boroughs, I encourage a strategy of diversity - retaining small rural schools which serve a specific need as well as creating larger schools. Please think through your strategy as too often new schools are built before there is sufficient demand, small schools may be closed causing needless transport when the option to walk to school is removed. In the climate crisis all of this needs to be factored into strategies which should not be based around smaller schools closing and amalgamated into large providers."*

*"Closing schools in village locations would be hugely detrimental to children in those areas, forcing them to travel everyday in order to access their education. The proposed area of the new schools next to the planned substation is very disconcerting. Our children deserve to learn in safe and pleasant surrounding not next to an imposing substation. Basing the new schools on plans to dramatically increase the number of homes in Biggleswade suggests the council cares little for residents concerns and will expand the town beyond its capacities no matter what local people feel."*

### **Focus on the child / education - not financials**

*"I do not agree that local village schools should be grouped into bigger schools, giving small children further to travel before and after the school day, not all children thrive in larger environments, I don't think you are considering all children in your approach."*

*"Our children have to come first - the decision and the approach/process must be child led."*

*"The wellbeing of the pupils needs to be at the heart of the changes and managing and planning for the transitions are key. The current generation of pupils have had unprecedented disruption to their education so this has to be handled well to help them in the future."*

### **Supportive**

*"It is sad to see well established & popular schools change but it is necessary to move to two tier."*

*"Changing to two tier system will improve the quality of applicants to teacher jobs as there will be a greater pool to choose from."*

*"I feel it is important that central Bedfordshire moves to a primary 5 to 11 years, 11 to 16 and sixth form, I feel this is an important move as it will meet the needs academically, socially and emotionally of these young people. I do however feel it is essential that education in the primary sector is still met within their village communities."*

### **Retain 3 tier system**

*"The three tier system which our children are in now works very well for their needs and ensures good transitions better than a single massive transition at the age of 11"*

*"We moved from the two tier system to the three tier system. In my view the students benefit greatly from going to Middle School and then on to Upper School, as opposed to being shipped off to Secondary at the age of 11. Schools can focus on the different key stages and they all benefit"*

### **The consultation process isn't transparent**

*"I believe that there has been very little transparency in the process. I also believe that the quality of the education and the timescales are as important, if not more important than any transition from 3 tier to 2 tier."*

*"It is biased towards a new school in Biggleswade."*

### **Bigger schools aren't always better**

*"You need to consider not all children work well in large schools and some children work better in smaller schools"*

*"The lower/middle/upper system works exceptionally well in more rural areas. Big is not better particularly when children are young"*

### **The change should happen sooner / taking too long**

*"It's taking too long to get a decision instead of getting on - building started and parents know what they are doing with their children's school options. This has been sitting in the pipeline for too long now."*

### **Changes happening at different times cause confusion / disruption to education**

*"Potton Lower School will not be moving along with Biggleswade. Potton plans to close July 22 and Biggleswade change in 2024 that is a 2 year gap! My son will not be*

*able to go to Stratton in Biggleswade as he will have to leave in year 6 and would have no school for 2 years. Biggleswade Middle Schools are full up so unable to take him. I am being forced to send my son to Sandy Secondary - where is the choice? Why are Potton closing early?"*

### **Concern / comments that planning permission for the new school hasn't been approved yet**

*"I find it hard to understand how there are 3 options being offered to wrestlingworth when 1 of the options has no certainty. How can option 3 be a move to a development east of Biggleswade that does not have approval? Should this be the route taken it either suggests that this planning was already decided behind closed door. Given the year pupils have had at wrestlingworth due to the pandemic, further levels uncertainty and disruption is not ideal"*

### **Edward Peake only just spent lots of money upgrading its site**

*"It seems a waste of resources to use Edward Peake as a primary school when so much money has been spent on expanding it and improving the facilities."*

### **It's good for Central Bedfordshire to use the same schooling system as other LA's**

*"It would be good for the system to be the same across Central beds and other neighbouring councils"*

### **Langford Village Academy issues about being at capacity**

*"Please put children at the centre of your consultation so that they are provided with schools close to their homes with their peers unlike the result of your totally flawed consultation regarding the Shefford/Stotfold cluster. This resulted in a reduced PAN for Langford village academy and local 4 year old children being allocated a school place in Biggleswade. Shame on you CBC. Spend the s106 money that you accrue in the place where the endless development occurs. Stop just building houses and put the infrastructure in place"*

### **Secondary school options aren't great**

*"I chose the school my children go to so that they were at the same school till year 8! Now they are going to have to change early and go to a quite frankly poor secondary school"*

### **What about SEND provision?**

*"I think this approach works but I can't help but wonder the empty lawnside lower school, this should be turned into a SEN school to help with the shortage of spaces my child would benefit"*

### **Concerns about stability of staff in the two-tier switchover**

*"How are you going to ensure that the Year 7 and 8 teachers do not leave Biggleswade Academy as if the teachers leave it will have an adverse impact on children's education"*

### **Lawnside Academy shouldn't move to the Edward Peake site**

*"Why after spending so much money on Edward Peake can't they stay there as a secondary as it is set up for one. A complete waste of tax payers money. Move lawnside to a new site and let the other schools convert earlier"*

### **Schools working together is important**

*"We feel very strongly that the Biggleswade Community Union of Schools (BCUS) schools should continue to work in collaboration with each other to ensure the best outcomes for staff and children in Biggleswade. As a board we are passionate about putting the needs of the children first and ensuring as little disruption as possible. The approach needs to be not only a plan that everyone is involved with but there must be clear and sensible timelines and coordination. During the transition period pathways for all children must be clear and communicated and the approach has to be sensible and not uproot children for the sake of minimal time between schools. We feel this can only be achieved through careful planning and a joint approach involving Schools for the Future team and all BCUS schools."*

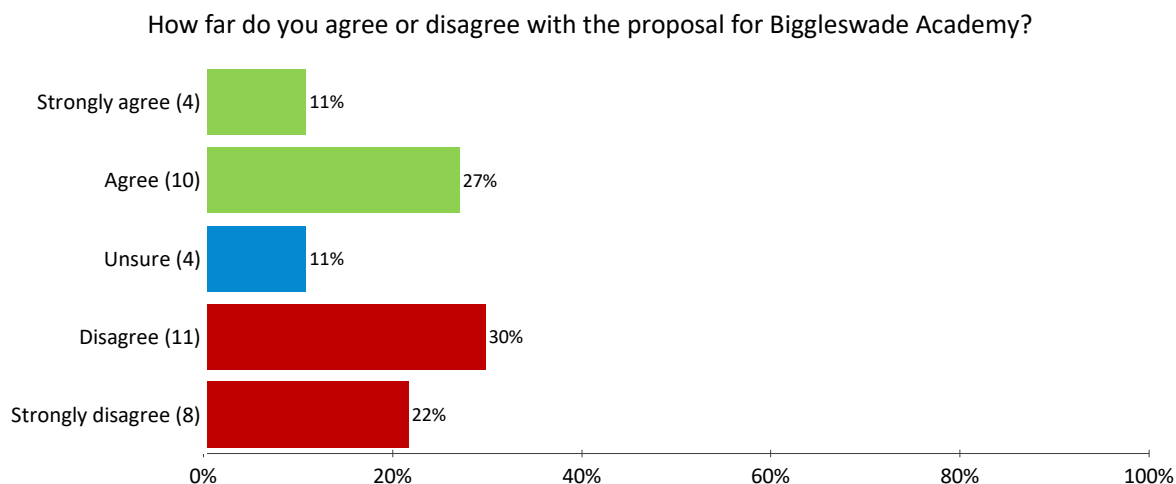
### **Stratton Upper should be the sixth form provision**

*"I strongly agree with the approach to Post-16 in supporting the existing strong sixth form at Stratton Upper School and ensuring that in terms of providing a broad and viable curriculum one town wide sixth form based at Stratton Upper but open to students from both 11-16 schools is the most appropriate offer for our young people. I strongly support the move to two tier. It is vitally important that the children of Biggleswade have a single coherent secondary journey from Y7-11 especially given the nature of the new GCSE curricula."*

## The schools

### Biggleswade Academy

The proposal for Biggleswade Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 840 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 1010 pupils.



37 people chose to respond about Biggleswade Academy, with 52% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal.

20 comments were received about the proposal. The most common topic was suggestions that Biggleswade Academy become an all-through school. The comments are summarised below:

Theme	No. of comments
Biggleswade Academy should become an all-through school	9
Biggleswade Academy has a good reputation	6
Caution about Biggleswade Academy becoming a primary	5
Retain lower/middle/ retain 3 tier / child isn't ready to move schools in year 7	4
Supportive of the proposal	3
Other	2

Some examples of the comments received are:

#### Biggleswade Academy should become an all-through school

*"Biggleswade academy is a far better middle school school than Edward Peake, with fantastic secondary school facilities. It also has much better KS2 results than Edward Peake, after-school facilities, etc. Why would its Year 7 and Year 8 provision be curtailed when it is clear that the children attending Biggleswade Academy are very happy to attend this school and that they do better than those attending Edward*

*Peake? It would make much more sense for Biggleswade Academy to remain a lower and middle school as it is currently, or if the drive to go to a 2 tier system is paramount, perhaps even better yet to encourage it to become an "all the way through school", like Etonbury Academy. I am very upset and concerned about the proposal with regards to making Biggleswade Academy a primary school as I believe this will have a negative effect on the quality of education that my children receive."*

*"Why not make this Good rated school into an all through school rather than remove KS3 provision in place of Stratton which is RI?"*

#### **Biggleswade Academy has a good reputation**

*"Biggleswade Academy has the best reputation within Biggleswade as a lower and middle school and the land to expand into a through school (2-16). This would be an option parents would want for their children locally. It is constantly over subscribed, gets good SATS results and offers those children in KS3 a wide range of subjects. To turn it into a primary school seems a short-sighted option. As a through school it would offer consistency for the pupils and offer a secondary option to those who live to the west of Biggleswade and those living in Langford who can't get their children into their local village school as you've cut it's pan by 1/3."*

#### **Caution about Biggleswade Academy becoming a primary**

*"Biggleswade Academy has the scope in my opinion, with investment, to be developed into a 'all through' school which are proving to be successful in Hertfordshire. I feel if it changes to a 4 class per year intake it would become a 'mega' primary and lose the community feel of a primary school."*

#### **Retain lower/middle/ retain 3 tier / child isn't ready to move schools in year 7**

*"You can build as many schools as you want, but leave this one the way it is... Having to move my daughter in year 6 into a secondary school is not the ideal for me."*

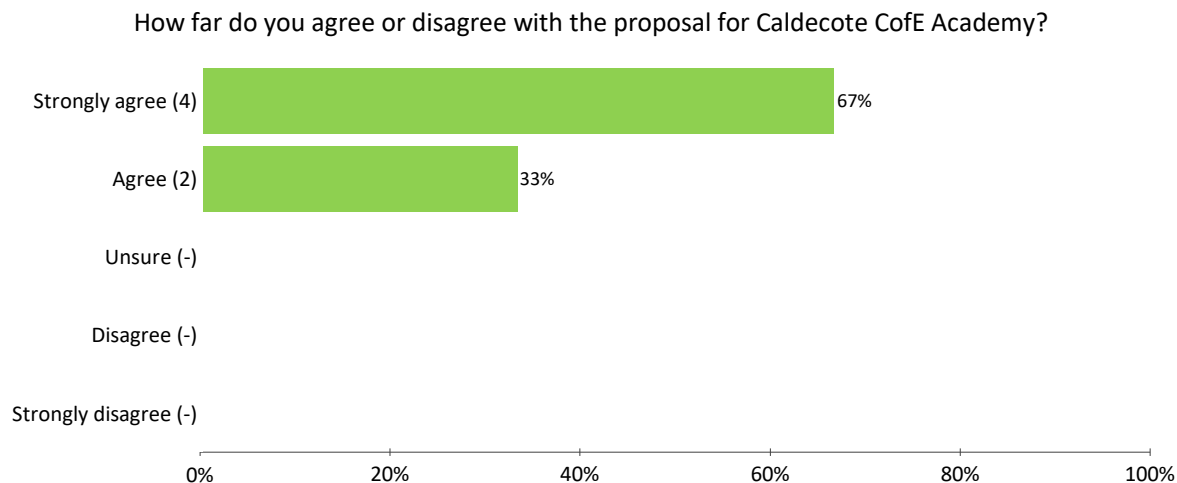
#### **Supportive of the proposal**

*"Makes absolute sense and the school is very good all round from experience. The site is well equipped and large enough for the changes."*



## Caldecote CofE Academy

The proposal for Caldecote CofE Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 168 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 120 pupils.



6 people chose to respond about Caldecote CofE Academy, with 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. It should be noted that as the total response for Caldecote CofE Academy is low, the support level should be viewed cautiously.

3 comments were received about the proposal for Caldecote CofE Academy and are provided in full below,

*“For a small village school this would be a life line however in order to fill the schools capacity it would need a lot of support and possible school transport links to promote its benefits to those living outside the village and entice students from Biggleswade as many don't know where Caldecote is.”*

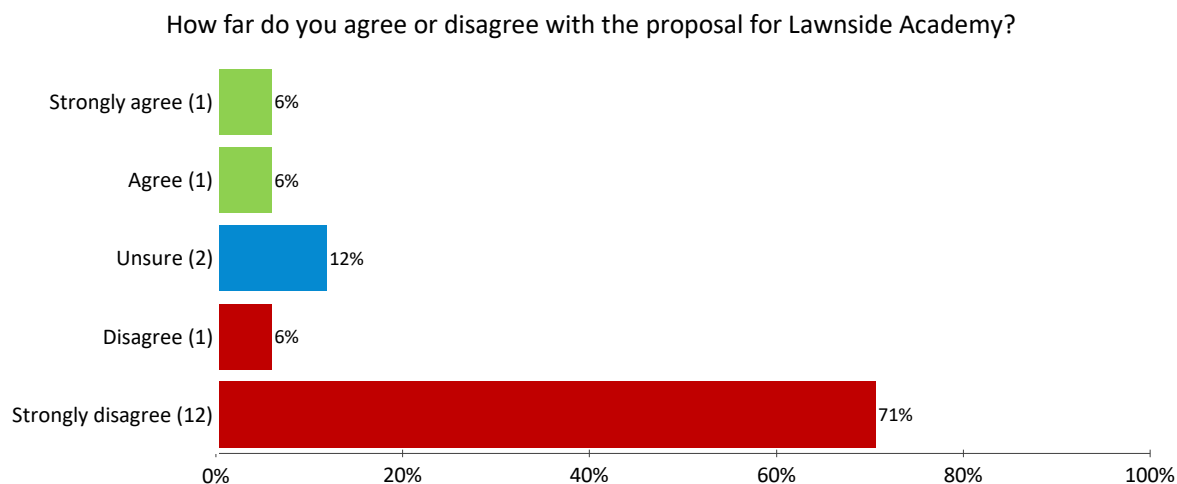
*“I think this is a sensible approach.”*

*“The problem with Caldecote is there is not sufficient public transport and no wrap around care provision (only on PT childminder) making it an unviable option for many families even if the capacity is there. With the added admissions pressure on St Andrews west by moving lawnside to Edward peake site, families who get Caldecote instead of St Andrew's will need this additional provision.”*

## Lawnside Academy

The proposal for Lawnside Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 420 pupils, and scope to grow once relocated to the vacated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site. The current capacity at the school is 300 pupils.

The school is proposed to relocate to the current Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site which is 0.7 miles away from the current Lawnside Academy site.



18 people chose to respond about Lawnside Academy, with 77% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal. There is a disparity between the total number of respondents shown in the charts, and those wanting to respond about Lawnside Academy as 1 person chose to only provide a comment.

7 comments were received and they are provided in full below. Within the comments there are some issues raised about the school currently requiring improvement/failing, and questions about why the need to move (and what would happen to the existing site):

*“Why is it relocating?”*

*“Lawnside Academy is a school rated "requires improvement" by Ofsted. The admissions to this school have been dwindling, with an exodus of pupils to other schools in recent years. Application numbers have been dropping year on year, as follows: 133 (2016), 110 (2017), 100 (2018), 87 (2019), 72 (2020). What is being done to address these failings? Should this not take priority over extending its provision? What confidence does the council have that this school will be able to cater to provide additional provision given its current failings?”*

*“This is a failing school unable to retain pupils at the moment. It is seriously undersubscribed. I not convinced that moving this school to potentially be one of the largest primaries in Biggleswade is a good idea. This school would have to radically improve and regain the trust of Biggleswade parents to come even close to a full PAN each year. Also, I would like to understand how CBC can justify the recent spending EP made by extending the school and equipping it to the highest standar that now will not be useful to a primary school. The building itself is not suitable as it stands for primary age children. All toilets will have to be redone to be suitable for 4-5 year olds.It is*

*extremely unfair to give one primary school pe halls and dance studios etc...no other primary will have that."*

*"Good idea - but, again, caution against expanding too much. I struggle to see benefits for pupils (at primary level) if school go above 500/600. The size and number of pupils, although bringing funding benefits, can be overwhelming for a lot of children who need a smaller, less populated environment."*

*"With this proposal and the building of the new Edward Peake school, the proposal puts the majority of the school places to the east of Biggleswade. St Andrews East already serves the east of the town, if more provision is needed to the east then St Andrews should accommodate that. Primary aged pupils who live centrally or to the west of Biggleswade will be detrimentally affected. You cannot expect a 4 year old who may have already walked to get to the current Lawnside site to walk a further 0.7 miles so people will drive. Potton Road is already a danger with all the cars trying to drop off middle school pupils, this will only be exacerbated with primary aged pupils who cannot just be dropped off but need to be walked to and from their classroom by parents, so people will be parking for longer with younger children in an already dangerous area."*

*"What would happen to the land? If this is earmarked for housing what access is proposed? The Baulk cannot take more traffic safely"*

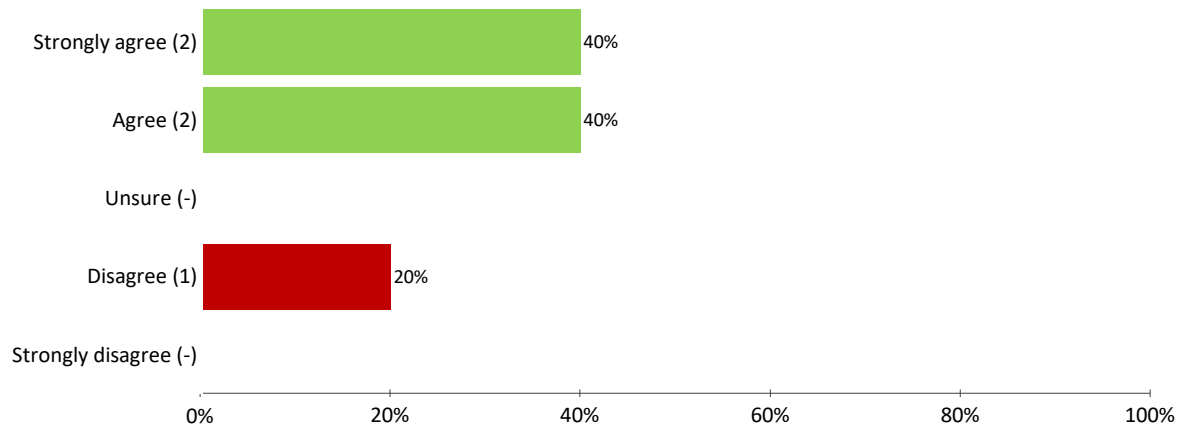
*"Moving Lawnside to Edward Peake is a waste of facilities both from Edward Peake capacity perspective and the existing Lawnside building. As mentioned above, it would also put additional pressure on St Andrew's west admissions and catchment by moving Lawnside further to the East. It would be better to use this site for a single sixth form provision but I believe the HIP funding may restrict this. Also given the special measures in place at Lawnside, is it the best choice to move to an expanded site?"*

## Northhill CofE VA Lower School\*

\*in the process of converting to an academy Summer/Autumn 2021.

The proposal for Northhill CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for Northhill CofE VA Lower school?



5 people chose to respond about Northhill CofE VA Lower School, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. The numbers received for Northhill are low, so the support should be viewed cautiously.

2 comments were received about the proposal for Northhill CofE VA Lower School and are provided in full below,

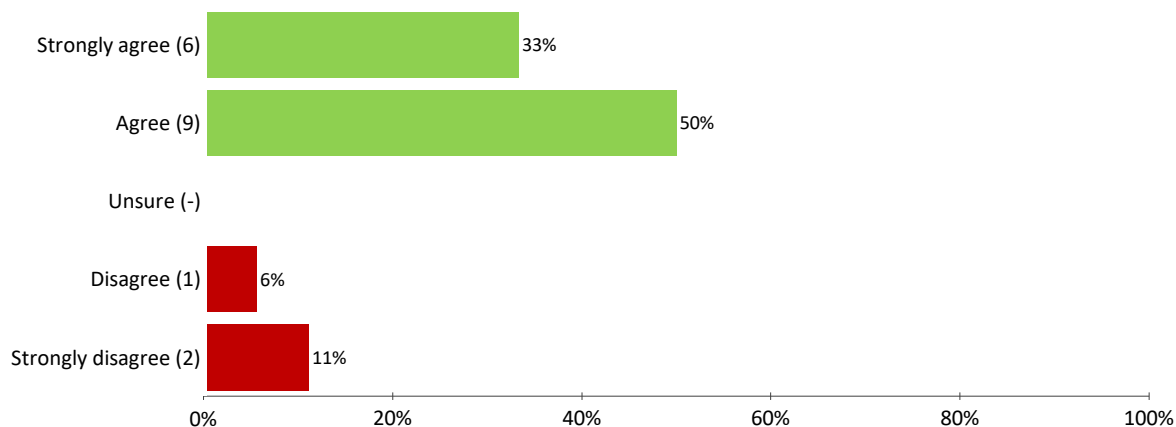
*“Can this be brought in any earlier so as to not disrupt those pupils in the school who need to transition out into an uncertain school allocation.”*

*“Sensible approach.”*

## St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower school east?



18 people chose to respond about St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - East, with 83% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal.

3 comments were received about the proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East and are provided in full below,

*"Sensible approach."*

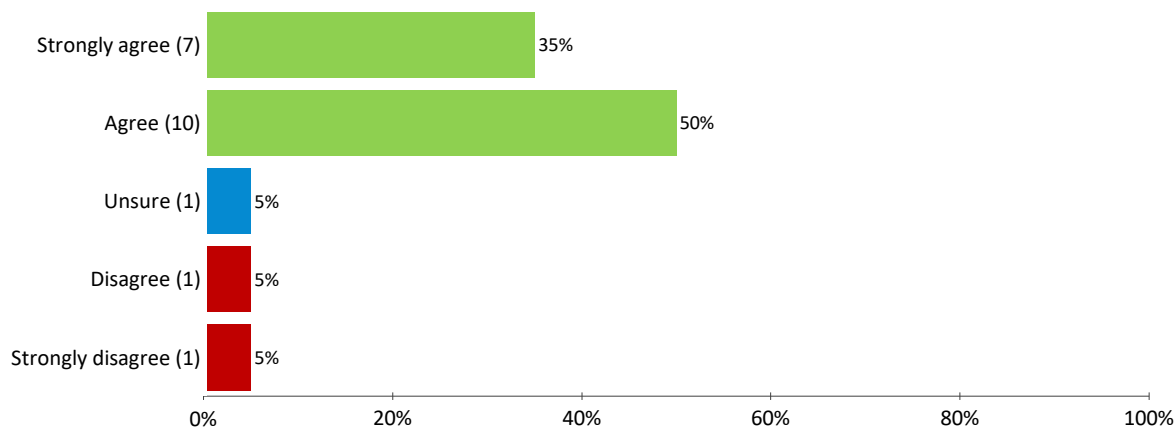
*"I think it should be a separate school from St Andrew's Lower School West"*

*"St Andrew's needs to be equipped with simialr facilities to other schools changing from middle to primary so it is not disadvantaged. What is the expectation of where the one less form entry children would go? Is there space on this site to expand and retain 3 form entry?"*

## St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower school west?



20 people chose to respond about St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - West, with 85% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. There is a disparity between the total number of respondents shown in the charts, and those wanting to respond about St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West as 1 person chose to only provide a comment.

5 comments were received about the proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West and are provided in full below,

*"I came from Houghton Regis where the two tier system was 7 or 8 years into the change (rough time) and the issue was with most of the primary schools not having the same level of facilities as a middle school and I felt the children lost out."*

*"Sensible approach."*

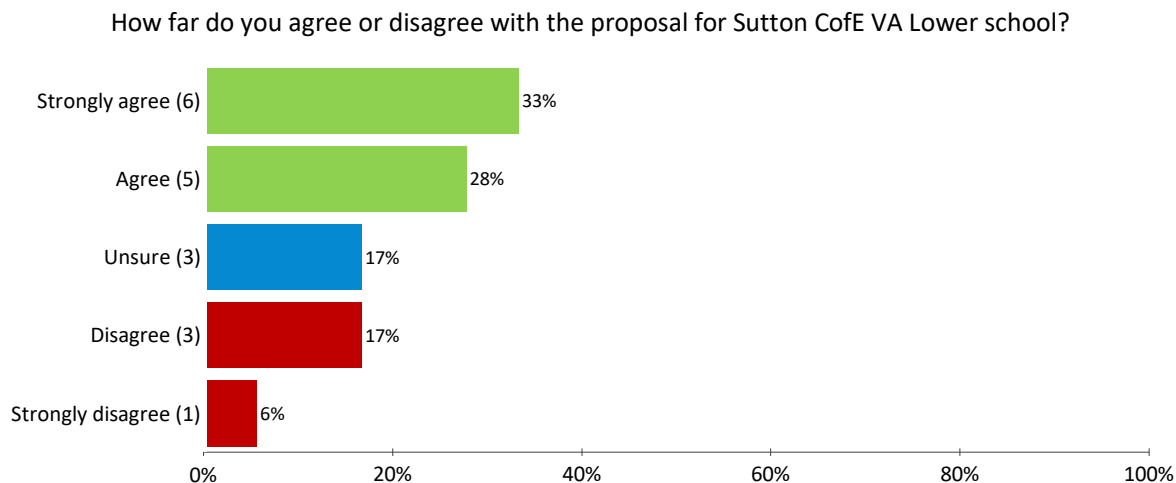
*"I think it should be a separate school from St Andrew's Lower School East"*

*"I would like to understand how the building will be managed to accommodate this. Also what will be down for the children who have to leave for year 5 only to go back to a primary school for year 6. This will too disruptive, they should be allowed to stay at their current lower school until year 6 so they can move on to secondary at that stage. I wonder if the current head teacher is the right person to see the school successfully through this transition?"*

*"This would mean one less form intake per year and with the plan to move Lawnside further East, would reduce capacity on the West side of town. This would only be viable if Lawnside stayed in it's existing location otherwise it impacts on st andrews west catchment and children would need to travel further to school. Also same comments regarding facilities as east site apply otherwise St Andrew's west would be disadvantaged."*

## Sutton CofE VA Lower School

The proposal for Sutton CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.



19 people chose to respond about Sutton CofE VA Lower School, with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal. There is a disparity between the total number of respondents shown in the charts, and those wanting to respond about Sutton CofE VA Lower School as 1 person chose to only provide a comment.

2 comments were received about the proposal for Sutton CofE VA Lower School West and are provided in full below,

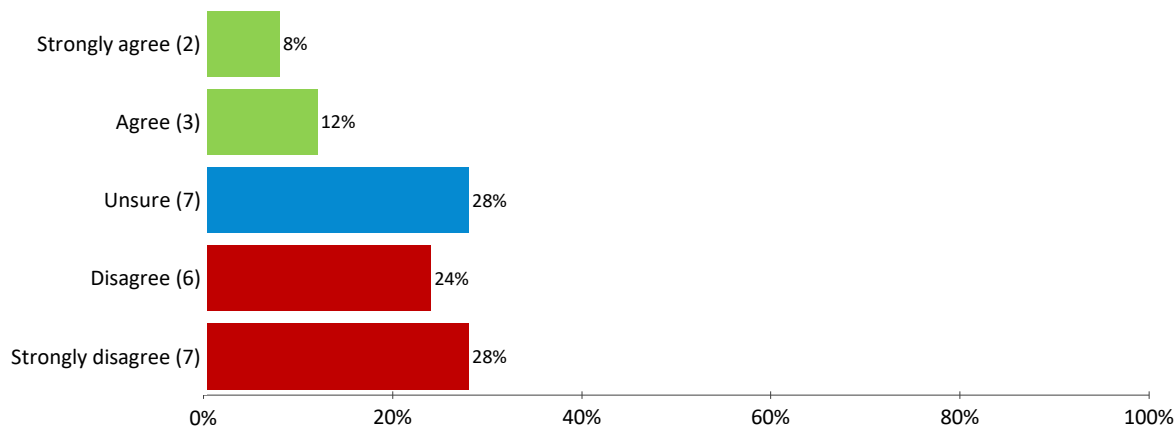
*“Such a small school. Waste of CBC resources on such small PAN”*

*“Sensible approach. Wouldn't like it to be much smaller, otherwise costs don't add up.”*

## New primary on the land east of Biggleswade

The proposal for a new primary on the land east of Biggleswade is that it will have a maximum capacity of 420 pupils.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a new primary on the land east of Biggleswade?



25 people chose to respond about the new primary on the land east of Biggleswade, with 52% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal, and 20% supportive.

6 comments were received about the proposal for a primary on the land east of Biggleswade and are provided in full below,

*"I believe the current plan is not well thought out, and I think the timescales proposed of 2024/25 are not credible."*

*"Access the road from St.Andrews? Pupils from some areas of Biggleswade will have a long walk to the nearby school."*

*"I would agree that this is a very sensible size for a primary. I would put a cap on size at this point, so that there isn't a temptation in later years to increase to 500 then 600 then 800 etc."*

*"All of the provision is being put to the east of biggleswade and will create a further divide in the community. The only reason to provide this school is to accomodate the closure of the village schools, which is appalling. the proposed location is too far out of town for it to provide a viable option for anyone living within the current bounds of biggleswade to walk their children to that school. It will involve driving and more cars on the road and more potential accidents involving children as parents park on pavements and corners and block people's drives as they already do around the current schools in the town."*

*"I question the location - how can this be proposed when there are no houses built here yet?"*

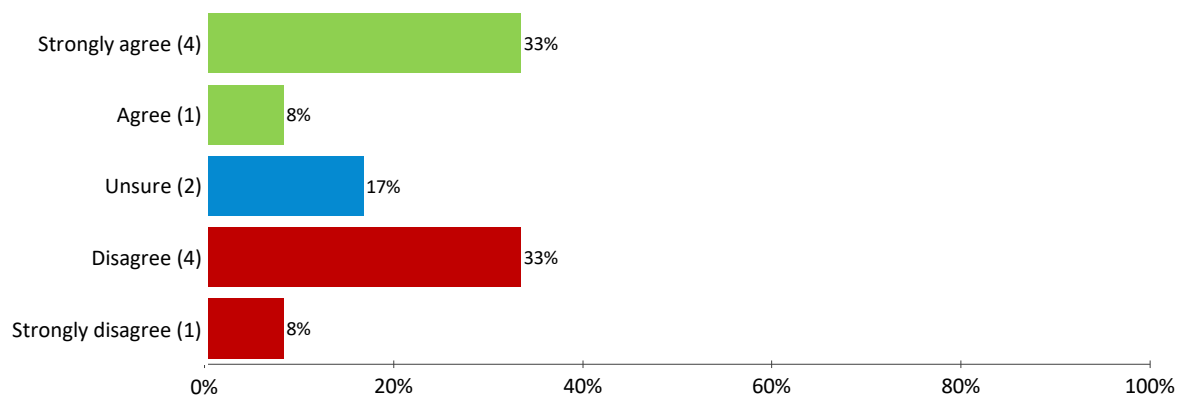
*"I believe the decision about Dunton & wrestlingworth needs to be taken first to determine how much extra capacity is required in Biggleswade and whether this capacity is to soak up the lost one form entry from both St Andrews sites or for forecasted growth."*



## Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools

The proposal for Potton Lower School and Potton Middle School is for them to amalgamate and become a primary school for 2022/23, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the lower school is 300 pupils, and current capacity at the middle school is 360 pupils.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for for Potton Lower School and Potton Middle School?



12 people in total chose to respond about Potton Lower School or Potton Middle School, with 41% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 41% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal. Most respondents answered the questions about both Potton lower and Potton middle schools, although a small number just responded for the middle school."

1 comment was provided and is in full below,

*"This is the only way forward for Potton. The middle school is now too small, with very few pupils in Year 7 and Year 8."*

## Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School

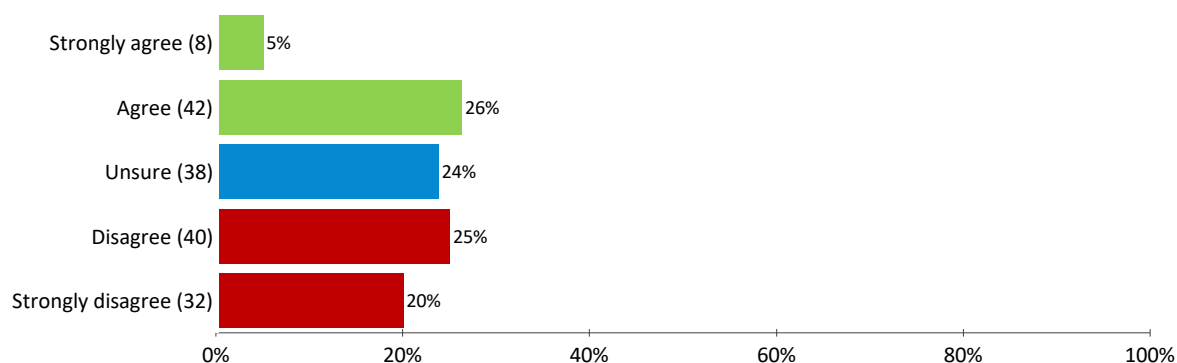
There are three options being considered for the future of Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower school:

Option A - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School transition to primaries on their current sites with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option B - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamating as a 1 form of entry (30 places a year) primary school on the Dunton Lower site with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option C - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamate and relocate as the new 2 form of entry (60 places a year) primary in the brand-new school on land east of Biggleswade with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council has identified the right factors (pages 11-14 in the consultation document) to be able to compare the options for Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School?



174 respondents chose to answer about either Dunton CofE VC Lower School or Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School. 45% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the council had identified the right factors to be able to compare the options for Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School. There is a disparity between the total number of respondents shown in the charts, and those wanting to respond about Dunton and Wrestlingworth, as a number only wanted to respond about the options for the schools, rather than the factors identified in the consultation document

Respondents were asked if there are any other factors that should be considered. 75 provided comments and they have been summarised below. The main themes were around enabling choice for those that want small schools or classes for their children, the ability to be able to walk to school or use sustainable transport, and the importance of community – both for being educated in, and the role the schools play in the community more generally:

Theme	No. of comments
They enable choice for those wanting small schools / classes	22
Sustainable transport / being able to walk to school	21

Education in their own community is important	19
Schools are the heart of the community	18
Both schools are rated outstanding by Ofsted	14
The relationship with the church	12
The amount of building in the villages should be considered	6
They have room to expand on their existing sites	6
Split site option	5
Available land in villages to expand on/ relocate	4
Planning permission for Biggleswade site hasn't been granted yet	4
Other	14

Some examples of the comments received are:

#### **They enable choice for those wanting small schools / classes**

*"Village schools are a desirable choice for many people with small class sizes."*

*"We chose Dunton school as it is significantly smaller than the schools in Biggleswade. My daughter can be very shy and anxious and would not have coped well in the bigger school setting. Having the chance to attend Dunton has allowed her confidence to grow and see her flourish in a wonderful school."*

*"...My children couldn't cope in a setting other than the small setting this school can provide and was the reason I chose this school in the first place. The tiny classes enable a much greater level of support where I know my children receive all the support they need. Also not everybody drives! Ofsted OUTSTANDING schools (which Wrestlingworth is) should be kept! These schools are rare to come by these days and the rating speaks for itself." (parent of children being assessed for Autism)*

#### **Sustainable transport / being able to walk to school**

*"Dunton school is outstanding and a vital part of the village. It makes no sense to force parents who can currently walk their children to school to have to drive several miles"*

*"When community and environment are such important factors to remove local schools or make further travel necessary for a significant number of parents this appears to go against the Council's policies of reduced travel and improve environments/community"*

#### **Education in their own community is important**

*"The importance of maintaining education for the rural communities to have primary education in their village community and at 11 they can then move to an urban environment. Families have chosen to buy houses in villages as they prefer a smaller family school for the children's education, a choice they have already made"*

*“Village school education is a vital part of rural life.”*

### **Schools are the heart of the community**

*“Village schools are the heart of the community where rural values are instilled. Something that is not encouraged in larger schools in towns.”*

*“As a former resident of Dunton I feel that relocating the school away from the village would be a huge blow to the life of the village. Both my children attended Dunton lower school and benefitted from being in a small school at the heart of their community with close links to the local church. In addition they could walk to school!”*

### **Both schools are rated outstanding by Ofsted**

*“I don’t believe CBC are factoring in a small village school means to the children who attend them, how can you seriously be considering consolidating these schools into one super school when they function exceptionally as two outstanding church schools? Move the schools to Biggleswade and they will no longer be a Dunton church school or wrestlingworth church school. Religion and community is not being. Take into account here.”*

*“It’s ludicrous to shut two outstanding schools.”*

### **The relationship with the church**

*“The School is linked to the Church and this is why we chose the School, because it has this religious link.”*

*“I remain passionate in my belief that we should uphold the importance of Church schools in a village setting where there is a close link between the school, the Church and each family. Dunton and Wrestlingworth each have an excellent school where there is a close relationship with each Church. It would be detrimental to remove this by amalgamating the two schools so that one of the churches is removed from this close relationship. It would be unthinkable to relocate to a separate site away from either Church. The Diocese of St. Albans has always been closely involved with each school and should continue to offer support.”*

### **The amount of building in the villages should be considered**

*“Housing should be a strong consideration as the facts in the consultation document are incorrect. Central Beds have approved social housing on the old tree nursery site and work is already underway. There is a further development of family houses on the old Co-op site on the High Street. As well as this infill has recently completed adding an additional 15 dwellings and this is ongoing, therefore it is incorrect to state that there is no proposed development in Wrestlingworth.”*

### **They have room to expand on their existing sites**

*“Both Dunton and Wrestlingworth have room to expand. This may mean moving classrooms to areas used as fields. There is still enough space on each site to enable the two tier system.”*

### **Split site option**

*“Both Wrestlingworth and Dunton are rated as Ofsted outstanding schools and the council should look to find ways to keep the schools intact as much as possible to preserve the best schooling that they give. Options such as primary across two sites (e.g. years 1 and 2 at Wrestlingworth, 3 and 4 at Dunton) seem not to have been considered.”*

**Available land in villages to expand on/ relocate**

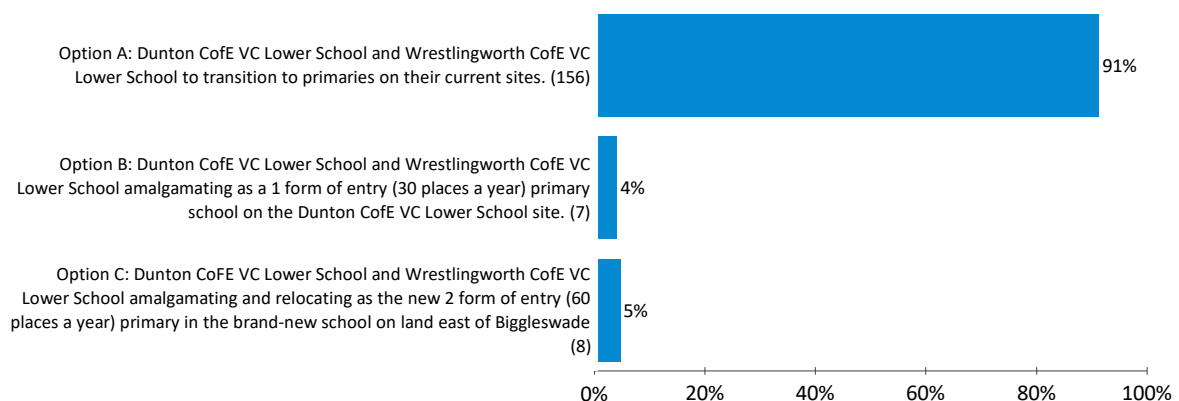
*“The consultation suggests that dunton may require additional land to accommodate the future plans, there is plenty of land already held as school playground and the land to the rear of the school is vacaant and unfarmed so land exists to accommodate its requirements.”*

*“The need for small children to have a local school which they can walk to and not be bussed (or driven by parents) to a distant school. Wrestlingworth has additional capacity nearby (Wrestlingworth Memorial Hall) if required.”*

**Planning permission for Biggleswade site hasn’t been granted yet**

*“The Board feels that amalgamating the village lower schools in Dunton and Wrestlingworth significantly reduces the choice for families living in those villages to educate their children within their immediate locality and the option for families in the wider Biggleswade area to choose a smaller school for their children. We understand that Option C relies on land to be provided by UK Regeneration Ltd developing the Land East of Biggleswade. Given that this site only has outline planning application and that the developer is currently looking to significantly reduce their S106 contributions towards education we would like to understand how this will impact the proposal. These are factors which should be considered.”*

On balance, based on the information provided about housing growth and site constraints, which of the three options do you think will provide the best solution for Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School?



91% of respondents supported option A - that Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School transition to primaries on their current sites

Respondents were asked if they could tell us why they answered in that way. 155 chose to provide comments and they are summarised below. The most common themes are the role that the schools play in the community, and that some parents/children want a choice of having smaller classes:

Theme	No. of comments
The schools are important to the village community	61
Some children/parents want/need smaller schools / classes	44
They are outstanding schools	43
Having schools in villages means sustainable transport can be used / less cars	31
Importance of church links for the schools	25
Local schools for local children	23
The schools can expand on their own sites	18
New homes are being built in the area, resulting in increased need for places	10
They're on the DfE rural schools list	8
Wrestlingworth can expand within the village	8
Dunton can expand within the village	6
Supportive of option C	6
Split site should be considered	3
Wrestlingworth doesn't have space to expand	2
Other	6

Some examples of the comments received are:

### **The schools are important to the village community**

*"Village schools are essential for the local community and for the well-being of local children. They also reduce pollution as commuting to Biggleswade would mean an hours drive daily (15 min each way). Compared to a short walk to wrestlingworth school, this is a huge environmental impact and increasing traffic on the roads."*

*"Our villages will not survive if you shut our local schools. Families will not move in to the villages. They are the heart of the community. Children need smaller schools."*

*"To maintain a community within each village. The school is an essential part of the village. It's also important that those families that live in the villages are able to send their child to their local school. Parents in other areas also should have the choice of where to send their children based on their child and their preferences/needs."*

*"These schools are integral to their communities and valued as smaller, local church schools. This provides the surrounding communities with a choice between a village*

*school or a larger primary in Potton or Biggleswade. I feel it is crucial to retain schools of different characters to suit different children."*

### **Some children/parents want/need smaller schools / classes**

*"The small village location is an ideal way some children to start their school life. Some children do not get on in larger groups and this is over looked in large schools, there are parents who choose to send their children to wrestling worth from biggleswade and surrounding areas because of this and this choice is being taken away from them."*

*"Because they are both great schools, and yes a lot smaller than the average lower school or others in the area it is amazing for the children that are there. Some parents pick these schools because they are smaller. Some children do not cope in large groups and therefore get left behind in their education which is unfair when there are smaller schools on offer that can massively change this because of the smaller class numbers."*

*"The needs of some children to flourish in a small family school environment. The rights of the parents to choose such schools."*

### **They are outstanding schools**

*"Why take away an outstanding brilliant school?"*

*"I think it is disgusting to close two close 2 outstanding schools. The council needs to work harder to explore options to keep these within the communities they currently serve. Rural school must never be closed."*

*"Morning the children to a school which hasn't yet got planning nor an ofsted rating when parents choose to move to a village for the village schools with a high ofsted rating is counterproductive. If Dunton is closed my daughter will not be going to a large multi entry school in Biggleswade."*

### **Having schools in villages means sustainable transport can be used / less cars**

*"The school is a critical part of the village community and there is a need to provide a setting for the village children to attend their local facilities, thereby saving on transport and the associated environmental implications."*

*"Keep good schools in their present position. There is no need to make any changes and it saves a lot of parents having to transport children by car, Saves a lot of CO2 emissions too."*

### **Importance of church links for the schools**

*"Both schools are at the heart of their communities. They provide an excellent education in a small friendly, inclusive environment. As Church schools they have strong links with their parish churches and contribute to community cohesion through inter-action with the church, parents and carers and the wider community. The environmental benefits to the children of their rural locations cannot be over emphasised. Forest School, guided walks and observation of the changing seasons all contribute to a rounded education."*

*"We moved out of a city for a village upbringing for our child. The small, intimate school has helped our shy little girl who suffers with an auditory processing disorder, to*

*find confidence and has that one to one with her teacher who was able to recognise her condition and help. We wanted our little girl to also go to a church school as our faith is important to us and the church has had a great influence on the school. A large school was not suitable for our daughter and we feel so blessed to have such a friendly, warm and caring, nurturing school at wrestlingworth."*

#### **Local schools for local children**

*"The local village schools are important to the local communities that they are part of. Children should be able to walk to school in their own village and play a part in their village community. These schools help to bring together the people that live in the village."*

*"With young children it is beneficial to have a local school in a small village both for the children and for the local community. We should keep schooling of young children local. It is a better environmental and social option for schooling in these small villages."*

#### **The schools can expand on their own sites**

*"The current sites are suitable to support the new year groups with little change"*

#### **New homes are being built in the area, resulting in increased need for places**

*"Each school provides excellent educational opportunities for their students in a caring smaller community environment supported by the families and wider community in which they are located .New housing is planned for Dunton ,37 family homes plus during this year of pandemic the sale of houses to families has increased. Biggleswade is growing fast too and children from the villages would be swept into an ever growing Biggleswade community .Wrestlingworth is also having new properties added and is also attracting new families in the newer phenomenon of urban rural migration ."*

#### **They're on the DfE rural schools list**

*"Both schools are on the DfE's designated rural schools list under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2020 and as such there must be considered a presumption against their closure. For me there is not a strong case for closure and further that closure would not be in the best interests to the provision of education in the local area of the villages and their catchment areas. I feel that CBC can use Dunton school to fulfil any need before building the new school."*

#### **Wrestlingworth can expand within the village**

*"The school is a critical part of the community and attracts young families to the village. Without a school the demographics of the village will be in danger of changing and it may become a retirement village. New family housing is currently being built and more planned making Wrestlingworth an attractive place to live with a school, thriving church, pub and active community. There is adequate room at Wrestlingworth school to build a further classroom making transition to primary an easy option and much more financially viable than planning for a new school."*

#### **Dunton can expand within the village**



*“There is room for expansion in Dunton and although it would be a blow for the village of Wrestlingworth, this would be a more cost effective solution. The amount of traffic and travel must be taken into consideration and parents encouraged to send their children to a school within walking distance of their homes.”*

### **Supportive of option C**

*“No space in Dunton to enlarge the current school. The number of pupils from Dunton is only a small percentage and most of the pupils travel in from Biggleswade anyway. This means that most parents drive cars, and the parking outside the school before and after the school day is horrendous. Most of the time the cars reach right up to vicarage corner and this becomes dangerous. Moving it to Biggleswade would negate the parking issue and be greener as parents would not have to drive.”*

### **Split site should be considered**

*“Another option would be to have an Infants School at one site and a Junior at the other site. This would keep the schools within the Benefice and local village environments”*

### **Wrestlingworth doesn't have space to expand**

*“It's important that Dunton community (which is growing) have a primary school within safe walking and cycling distance. Sadly the site at Wrestlingworth is too constrained to create a viable primary school.”*

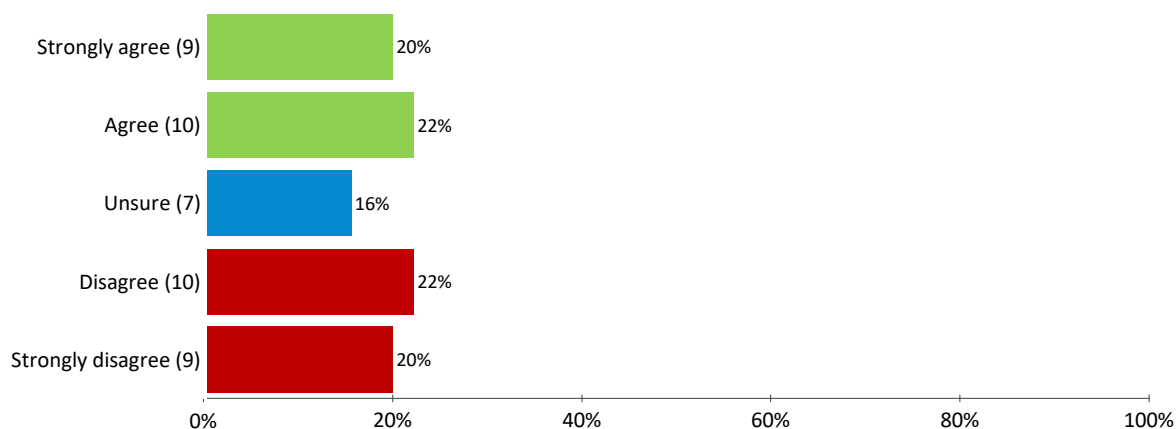
A separate consultation response was received from the Dunton and Wrestlingworth Church of England VC Lower Schools Federation citing that *“the Governing Body voted unanimously to support of Option A in the consultation, keeping both schools open and will be responding accordingly.”* The full response can be seen in Appendix 1.

## Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School

The proposal for Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 900 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 840 pupils.

Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would move into the brand-new secondary school that will be built on land east of Biggleswade.

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School?



46 people in total chose to respond about Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School, with 42% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 42% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the proposal.

35 comments were provided and they are summarised below. The most common theme is about the amount of money spent on the current site, which would then appear to be wasted on a primary school:

Theme	No. of comments
Lots of money has been recently spent on existing site / waste of money if it becomes primary	14
Stay on current Edward Peake site and convert to a secondary school	8
Support proposal	7
Comments about location / safety / access to new site	6
Comments/ questions about how the change to two-tier would work	5
Comments about planning permission / funding for new site	3
Should be sixth form provision for the town	3
Shouldn't be a church school	3
Other	3

Some examples of the comments received are:

### **Lots of money has been recently spent on existing site / waste of money if it becomes primary**

*"Lots of money spent on the new build a waste of money to move a primary school into there, primary do not require a science lab, cooking room etc"*

*"Recent expenditure on the Edward Peake site and the upgrading of facilities will have been mis-management of funds by central beds...as would be too well resourced to become a primary school. Alternative plan: make it a sixth form college...and special provision for SEND 0-19. Please Lawn side can go into new 'East side' proposed site...and the village schools can remain where they are"*

### **Stay on current Edward Peake site and convert to a secondary school**

*"Although I agree that the school should become another secondary I disagree with moving it to a new site. The waste of public money this would bring is shameful. There has been a large amount of money spent on the school in recent years and to not continue with that growth I feel would be incredibly wrong and short sighted. The current site serves a wider area of Biggleswade whereas the proposed site would benefit the east side area of the town. Also if it is handed to lawnside I feel it put other lower schools at a disadvantage as they do not have the space and facilities on offer at the Edward Park site."*

### **Support proposal**

*"I fully support EP moving to secondary and also moving to a new site that will provide all the facilities the age group will require"*

### **Comments about location / safety / access to new site**

*"Depending on the location (how far East of Biggleswade), walking and other transportation routes must be considered. The school must be accessible, safe, and encourage environmentally friendly travel (walking and cycling). The location and new proposed catchments must be proposed and consulted on (it would have been helpful to have these now)."*

### **Comments/ questions about how the change to two-tier would work**

*"What would happen with pupils in the upper years when transition happens? Would they be given the choice of Stratton or Edward Peake? This is especially important for children who are living very close to the current Edward Peake."*

### **Comments about planning permission / funding for new site**

*"The new site seems to reduce capacity from the existing with similar numbers across 5 years instead of 4. What advantage does the new site give if only to free up the existing site? Does it not need to be bigger? The whole plan hinges on the planning and successful build (budget and schedule) of the new site which puts it at tremendous risk."*

### **Should be sixth form provision for the town**

*"It is ideally situated and equipped to become the proposed sixth form provision sitting between Stratton and the proposed new secondary school."*

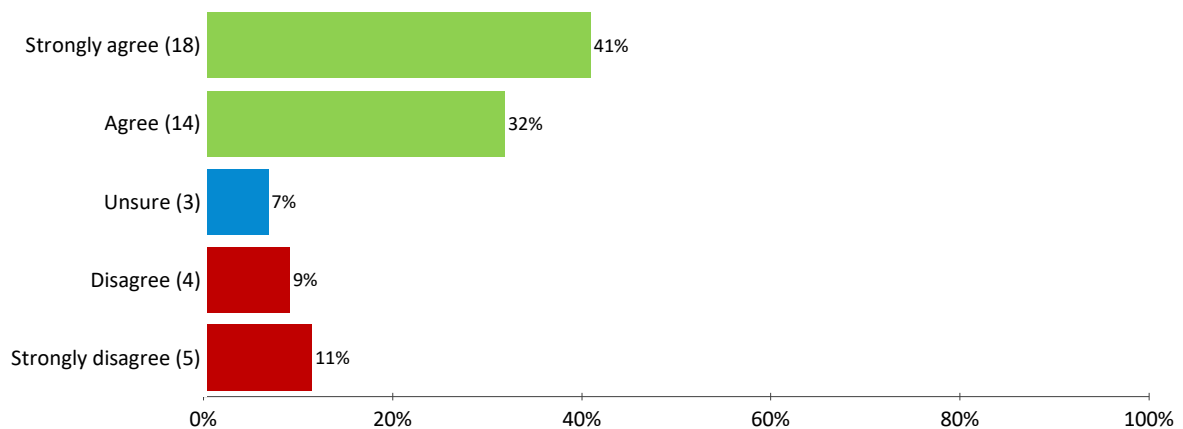
## Shouldn't be a church school

*"I do not agree with church schools."*

## Stratton Upper School

The proposal for Stratton Upper School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 1200 pupils (Years 7-11). The current capacity at the school is 990 pupils (Years 9-11).

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal for Stratton Upper School?



44 people in total chose to respond about Stratton Upper School, with 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal.

22 comments were provided and they are summarised below. The most common theme is about Stratton's current Ofsted rating and reputation.

Theme	No. of comments
Stratton Upper has a poor reputation / Ofsted rating	11
Supportive of proposal	6
The change could happen sooner	5
The school needs a lot of investment	4
What is being done to improve the school ahead of expanding year groups?	3
Other	2

Some examples of the comments received are:

### **Stratton Upper has a poor reputation / Ofsted rating**

*"This school needs a complete overhaul - it currently has a poor ofsted report. I wouldn't want my child to attend."*

*"Stratton Upper School has a terrible reputation within the community of Biggleswade. I have major concerns with my child moving to this school within the next couple of years. Let alone it going to a two tier system. So much so I have considered moving my child to a secondary school out of town. The school has an requires improvement Ofsted rating and I am concerned that a school that is already struggling to provide a good standard, how can it cope to accommodate 2 more year groups?"*

### **Supportive of proposal**

*"This can only be of benefit to students as they gear up to sit their GCSEs - Year 9 alone is not enough time in a school to settle and make those choices. Teaching staff would be able to adopt more effective teaching strategies which begin to be embedded earlier meaning they should be more effective."*

### **The change could happen sooner**

*"Stratton has a large site and could already accommodate year 7/8 as under capacity, why could they not become a full secondary school prior to the proposed date"*

### **The school needs a lot of investment**

*"Stratton has struggled for many years with a very poor reputation locally, and buildings which need demolition. Why would parents choose to send their child to this school if there is going to be a brand new school (Edward Peake) built to the east of the town? Why have CBC not considered moving Stratton to be the brand new school - giving it a fresh start, especially when there are plans to expand SEND provision and expand Ivel Valley on to the existing site. The parents of Biggleswade are going to be thrown into a choice of the nice new school or the Stratton with the poor reputation and tired building which is struggling for space. It will become a town of two halves, the haves and the have nots."*

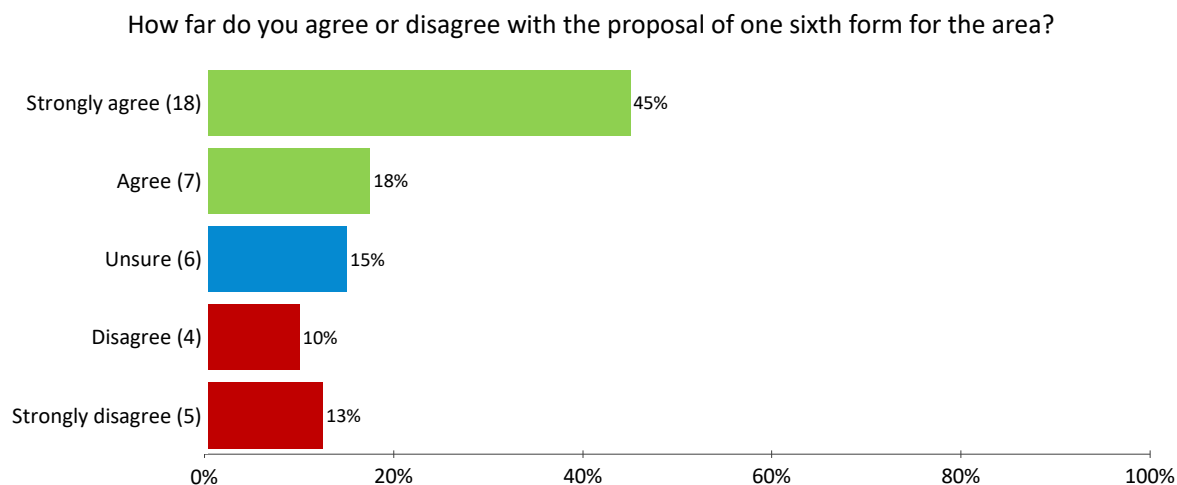
### **What is being done to improve the school ahead of expanding year groups?**

*"Stratton school is currently rated as "requires improvement" by Ofsted. What is being done to address this ahead of increasing its provision to include year 7 and year 8 pupils?"*

An additional consultation response was also received from Stratton Community Farm CIC in response to the consultation detailing their wish to "create a care farm and horticultural space for Stratton students and Biggleswade residents". The full response can be seen in Appendix 1.

## Sixth form

The proposal for sixth form provision is to create one sixth form for the area, open to pupils of both the existing Stratton Upper and Edward Peake schools. The sixth form would have a proposed capacity of 420 students (Years 12 and 13).



40 people in total chose to respond about the sixth form provision, with 63% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal.

25 comments were provided and they are summarised below. The most common theme is about support for the proposal of one sixth form for the area.

Theme	No. of comments
Support proposal of one sixth form for the town	9
Need for choice / multiple sites	7
Stratton has experience of running a sixth form, so the sixth form should be placed there	7
Comments about forecasting / size	3
The need to offer vocational courses locally	3
Use Edward Peake site for the sixth form	2
Other	5

Some examples of the comments provided are:

### Support proposal of one sixth form for the town

*"I strongly support the proposal to provide one town wide sixth form as this provides the best possible curriculum offer for students. I believe this should be provided at Stratton Upper School and support their proposal to develop the unique and distinct identity of the already strong sixth form to ensure the best possible breadth and quality of curriculum for students in Biggleswade and the surrounding villages."*

### **Need for choice / multiple sites**

*"If you are going through with this proposal, only making one 6th form would be a missed opportunity. It is once again limiting the choice of pupils for their education. If there is only 1 sixth form provision, there is no incentive for the schools to perform well as it is the only local option. Pupils should have the option to vote with their feet and a bit of healthy competition would be good to ensure that both 6th forms excelled. Also where is the vocational provision for those that are less academically minded, pupils have to travel to get to a vocational college. you could have 1 as a 6th form and 1 as a further education vocational centre."*

### **Stratton has experience of running a sixth form, so the sixth form should be placed there**

*"I think the sixth form provision should come from Stratton Upper School as they have the experience of sixth form students and learning and are a good provider."*

### **The need to offer vocational courses locally**

*"I have managed a sixth form that worked in consortium with 3 other sixth forms. And this worked well through alignment of timetables, shuttle bus services where different sites delivered different provision which enable students to have greater choice. However I would advocate more Level 3 vocational provision (such as BTEC Extended Diploma pathways) become more widely available. Alternatively, could you not turn the old Lawnside site (or Sandye Place) site in to one larger sixth form college. I would recommend you look at the Wootton Upper/Lincroft/Kimberly College as a possible case study for consideration in biggleswade. Possibly in partnership with Sandy Secondary?"*

### **Comments about forecasting / size**

*"We welcome the proposal for single sixth form provision for the town and hope that it will offer both academic and vocational courses enabling more young people to continue education locally. We do feel strongly that this facility should provide equal access to all students, with places allocated irrespective of where students completed Year 11. We question the proposed capacity of 420 as this assumes that only 50% of students at the new Edward Peake and Stratton Secondary Schools would continue to Sixth Form in Biggleswade. If both academic and vocational courses were offered would this figure not be higher with fewer young people having to travel to colleges in Bedford, Hitchin and Stevenage for vocational courses as at present?"*

### **Use Edward Peake site for the sixth form**

*"6th form to be managed by both schools?? In practise this will not work as 1is local authority and one A MAT. Is this an enforced scademisatiin of Edward Peake? Increase capacity and include additional vocational courses not available locally and use current Edward Peake site."*

## Comments about the overall plan

Respondents were then asked for any comments about the overall plan. 186 chose to provide comments and they are summarised below. The most common theme was about retaining village schools.

Theme	No. of comments
Don't close village schools	53
Supportive of two-tier / proposals	39
Comments about consultation process / plan overall	24
Concerns about pupils and transitions / how it will work	18
Village schools are important for the community	18
Parents need to have choice of school / one size doesn't fit all	15
Funding / planning permission relating to the plan is uncertain	13
Don't change to two-tier	12
Infrastructure is needed to support the schools	9
Focus on improving education in the area	8
The current Edward Peake site just had lots of money spent on it	8
Comments about forecasting / is it enough places?	7
The change should happen sooner where possible	7
Why are successful schools losing out?	6
Concern about Stratton	5
This is just about financials / saving money	5
Comments about SEND provision in the area	4
Move both St Andrew's site onto the current Edward Peake site	4
This is a waste of money	4
Comments about Langford	3
Need for secondary school closer to town centre	3
Comments about the existing St Andrew's east site	2
Concern about Lawnside	2



Lawnside shouldn't move to another site	2
Other	17

Some examples of the comments received are:

### **Don't close village schools**

*"It is not in the best interests of the children or the villages to close incredible village schools. They should be maintained and celebrated"*

*"I am incredibly disappointed that moving these schools is even considered an option. It is scandalous to risk Outstanding, village based, personal educations for the sake of... I don't even really know what."*

*"I have no idea why there is such an obsession with moving to the two tier system and cramming as many children as possible into one school. Parents have to travel further and children get far less individual attention. The best education in this county is at the small village lower schools. To get rid of them is educational vandalism"*

### **Supportive of two-tier / proposals**

*"The plan looks imaginative and exciting with new schools and a good use of existing ones."*

*"I agree with two tier system and building new schools but please also focus on attracting high quality teachers who will bring grades up. As someone with a young child I would rather move to another area while we have the time than send him to any of the secondary schools here currently (based on grades reported online)."*

### **Comments about consultation process / plan overall**

*"I think the decision has already been made and you are simply going through the motions with this consultation. I think it is appalling that you are announcing the results of this consultation after parents have to apply for their children that are starting school in September 2022."*

*"Why has it taken so long to develop an education strategy for this part of the county? It seems that other areas have taken decisions for themselves and not been challenged. Has this been an independent review or is there a hidden agenda? To base a whole education plan for the foreseeable future on a housing development that may not go ahead seems to suggest that there is undue influence here."*

### **Concerns about pupils and transitions / how it will work**

*"Take into consideration of specific year group transitions in the different stages and how many transitions the groups will need to make eg current year 2. Also think about the expense of uniform for parents."*

### **Village schools are important for the community**

*"For villages like wrestlingworth, this is more than just the potential loss of a school. It is the eradication of a central part of community and village life for all families, not just those with children at the school. It impacts wider in the community than just small children."*

### **Parents need to have choice of school / one size doesn't fit all**

*"it is important not to overcrowd schools and to give parents and children plenty of options to choose from as to their child's education"*

### **Funding / planning permission relating to the plan is uncertain**

*"Overall I truly believe that the move to a 2 tier education system is the best thing for Biggleswade but the proposal leaves a lot of questions unanswered and the current proposals being reliant on achieving planning permission and funding from S106 from a huge housing development makes me wonder if and when this will ever happen. I do not believe the proposal put forward by CBC offers the best use of money or the most sensible solutions and should be consulted on much further."*

### **Don't change to two-tier**

*"I have always believed in the 3 tier system and still do, that is why we live in Biggleswade and no longer in the Royston area which has lost its middle schools. However, if this is going to be the future then I cannot understand removing education from a good school in favour of an RI school, if good education provision for the future is required then expand the current good schools."*

### **Infrastructure is needed to support the schools**

*"Please consider the effects on local villages and traffic in the area. It is important to maintain village communities and to make sure that there is the infrastructure to support large scale developments."*

### **Focus on improving education in the area**

*"I feel there are fundamental problems at Stratton Upper, having lived in the area for over 10 years this has not improved. Given that CBC have tried various ways of trying to make improvements it has failed and it is now under an academy, who will try to improve where CBC have failed. Given that many village schools are church linked there should be a church based secondary option -Edward Peake, close Stratton and open a new secondary school without the "baggage" that Stratton has."*

### **The current Edward Peake site just had lots of money spent on it**

*"It's not the transition to 2-tier that I have an issue with but, the plan for Biggleswade. The proposal to hang it all off the back of what is already a contentious and locally unpopular building project, throw away £6million of improvements to Edward Peake, close popular village schools, and the issues of transport that this will cause for parents in these villages, force an increase of traffic towards one side one town on already over crowded roads. This proposal defies any logic or any thought for the residents and children. There are so many other better possible solutions, I don't want to imagine why you chose this one."*

### **Comments about forecasting / is it enough places?**

*"The plan fails to take account that CBC are constantly granting planning permission for more houses. Closing these schools and moving them to a new site almost immediately fills a class and at the rate of growth in the town this new school will quickly become over subscribed - like St Andrew East was this year! If 2021 applications are anything to go by schools in the area will quickly become over*

*subscribed therefore for future planning it makes no sense to close two outstanding schools."*

### **The change should happen sooner where possible**

*"The time scale involved is very lengthy which I appreciate for where new builds have to be completed but other schools with the infrastructure already could transition sooner"*

### **Why are successful schools losing out?**

*"How is the education of children going to be raised in a greater level under a two tier system rather than three tier? Many millions of pounds have been spent upgrading the current Edward Peake site improving facilities for key stage 3 children. How is the proposal making best use of these public funds as it seems it has been wasted on Edward Peake. How will each school be supported in improving the educational standards? If Biggleswade academy become a primary they will lose pupils to Edward Peake and Stratton, given the geographical location most likely Stratton. Given the latest Ofsted ratings how are the council going to guarantee a better outcome for children taking them from a setting rated good to a setting rated requires improvement?"*

### **Concern about Stratton**

*"I do think a two tier system is the way forward, I am very concerned about Stratton Schools ability to handle such a major change. The children of Biggleswade do deserve a choice of secondary schools but the only one we have seems not fit to handle such a responsibility of two more year groups."*

### **This is just about financials / saving money**

*"I am concerned that the factors taken into account have been too concerned with penny pinching and insufficient consideration has been given to the overall social cohesion and development of Biggleswade and the surrounding villages as places to live, as opposed to dormitory facilities or commuter towns and villages."*

### **Comments about SEND provision in the area**

*"Please use the empty lawnside school if all the plans go ahead and make a SEN school."*

### **Move both St Andrew's site onto the current Edward Peake site**

*"Only as already mentioned re Edward Peake staying on a site that is already set up as a secondary. Or failing that, why not put St Andrews East and West together as 1 school onto the Edward Peake site and move Lawnside to St Andrews East. That way St Andrews really will be one school with 1 head and 1 governing body. There has to be a way that this process can be speeded up. I fully believe the 2 tier system is better and we are failing our younger children educationally by dragging our heels."*

### **This is a waste of money**

*"It's not practical, not necessary to try to make schools designed and built for a 3 tier system to be 'shoe horned' into a 2 tier system for no educational gain. It's a disgraceful waste of tax payer money"*

### **Comments about Langford**

*"Why, when offering children from Langford a place 4 miles away at Lawnside do then propose to move it even further away. Why is there money available to build these schools in Biggleswade but not Langford village Academy?"*

### **Need for secondary school closer to town centre**

*"I think the transition to 2-tier system is overdue, and applaud the decision to undertake the change. The biggest concern is the lack of secondary school near the town centre (Biggleswade). Hopefully the changes will happen prior to my child needing to move schools. I find the current arrangement for a 9 year old getting to one of the middle schools is inadequate for a child living on the West of town. It may not seem much, but the difference in maturity between a 9-year old and an 11-year old when it comes to making their own way to school is significant. I am in favour of the changes overall, and would encourage them to happen as soon as possible."*

### **Comments about the existing St Andrew's east site**

*"I agree with having a two tier system the proposed plan showcases a huge waste of money due to the relocation of Edward Peake following the expansion done there recently. Also how is St Andrews east going to be expanded the facilities there are already under pressure as in the school hall and outside area are small for the amount of children who attend."*

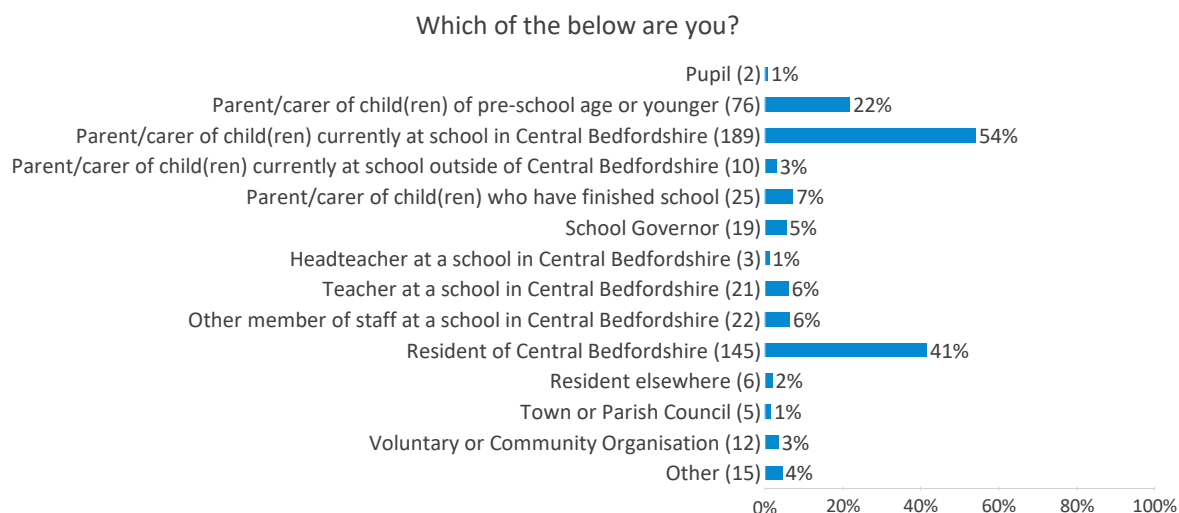
### **Concern about Lawnside**

*"The whole proposal pivots on 2 new schools and 3,000 new houses being built in Land East and it gives a 2 to 3 year framework to achieve this. I do not think that these timescales are credible and I also think that it sends the wrong message. Parents need to be given time to evaluate the changes being proposed so that they can plan ahead their children's education. I believe the current plan is not well thought out, and I think the timescales proposed are also not credible. My main concern is the reduction of the year 7 and year 8 provision at Biggleswade Academy, and why this school is not being encouraged to become an "all the way through" school. I am also very concerned about the fact that there is no plan to address the failings of other schools such as Edward Peake, Stratton Upper and Lawnside Academy."*

### **Lawnside shouldn't move to another site**

*"I strongly disagree that lawnside academy should move location. It's been there for years and it would be inconvenient to travel further for pick ups/ drop offs. Edward Peak is located in a dangerous place for younger children (9 and under) to travel near such a busy road and it's inconvenient having limited parking spaces. I feel this will encourage more vehicle usage which is damaging to the environment . Lawnside has been there for a numerous amount of years and it would be such a shame to see a thriving building that's excelled, be relocated."*

## About the respondents



The two parish councils that responded were Dunton, and Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley.

The voluntary or community organisations that responded were:

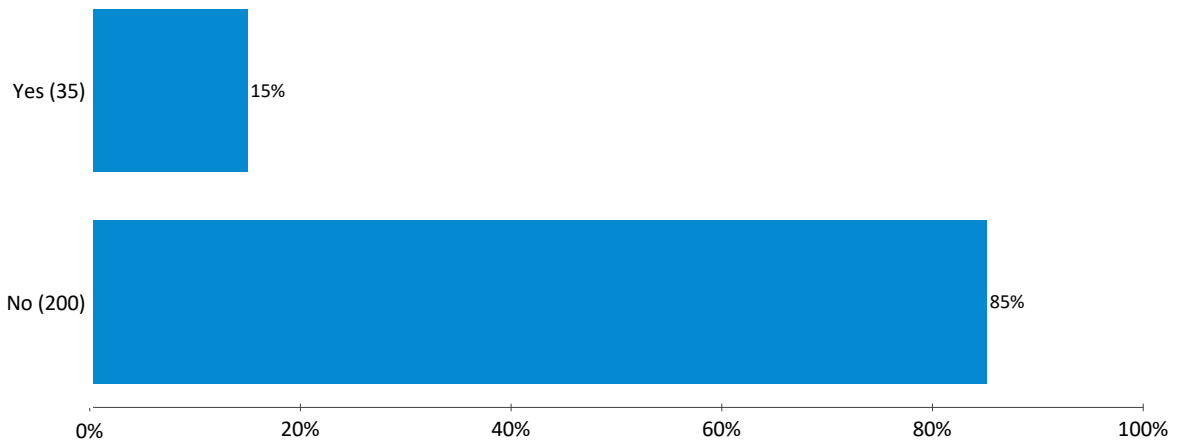
- Vicar of Dunton, Wrestlingworth and Eyeworth
- Biggleswade Good Neighbours
- Church Warden of St Peter's, Wrestlingworth
- Chairman of Trustees - Wrestlingworth Memorial Hall
- St. Mary Magdalene , Dunton Parish Church - Church Warden

Those that responded as a pupil, parent of a child at school, School Governor, Headteacher or teacher, were asked to identify the school. The number of responses per school are as follows:

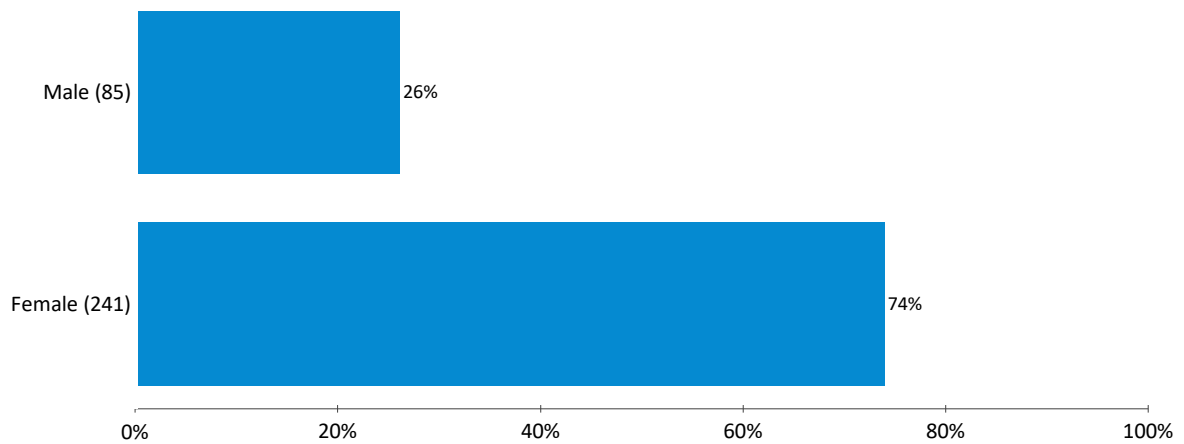
School	No. of responses
Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School	37
Biggleswade Academy	26
Dunton CofE VC Lower School	21
Stratton Upper School	18
Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School	16
St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - West	10
St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School - East	9
Sutton CofE VA Lower School	5
St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School (did not specify site)	3

Caldecote CofE Academy	1
Lawnside Academy	1
Northhill CofE VA Lower School	1
Potton Lower School	1
Potton Middle School	1
Schools outside of the cluster	12

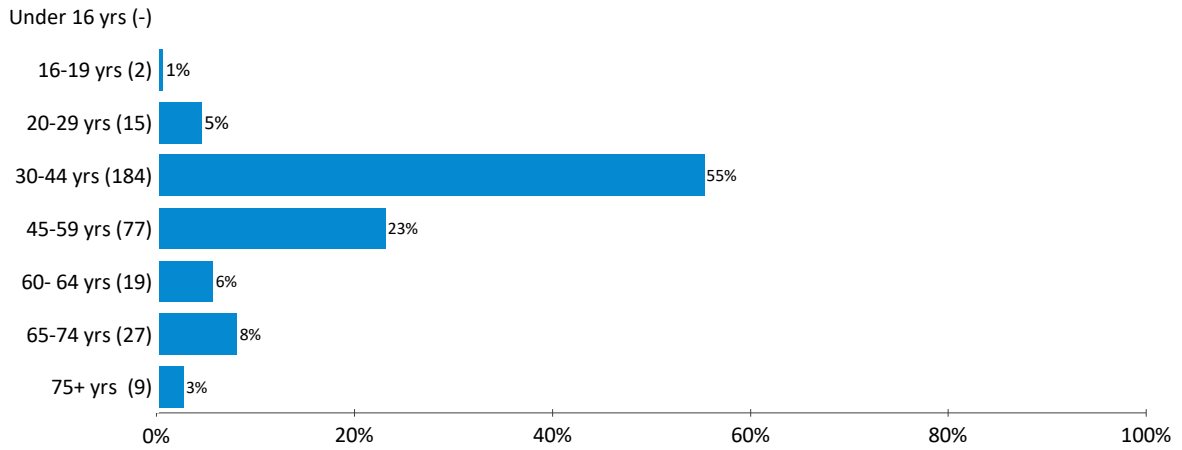
Does your child(ren) have any special educational needs?



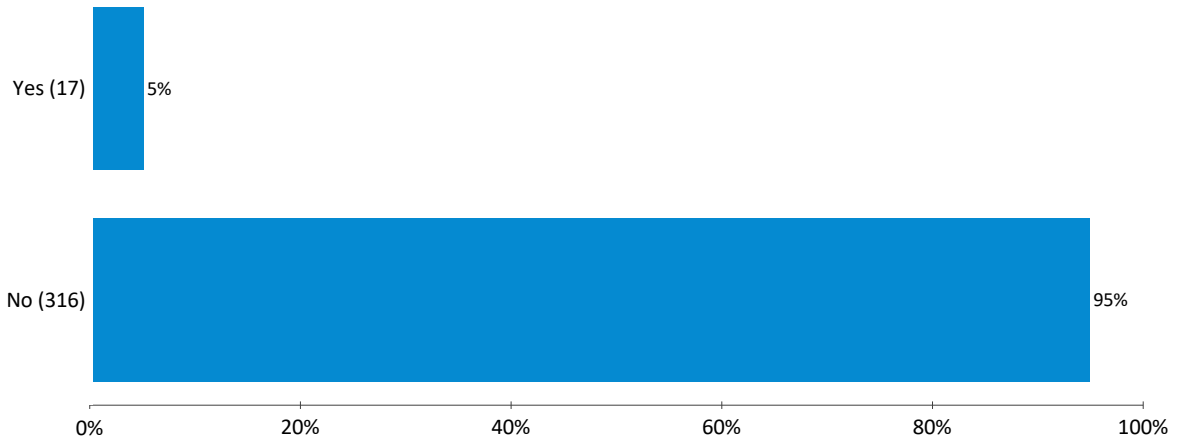
Are you:



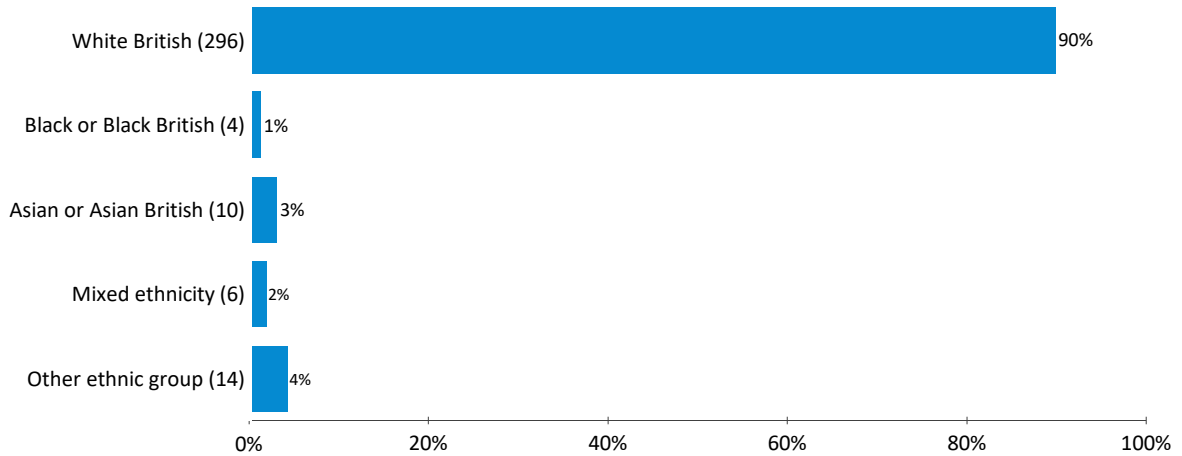
### What is your age?



### Do you consider yourself disabled?



### To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

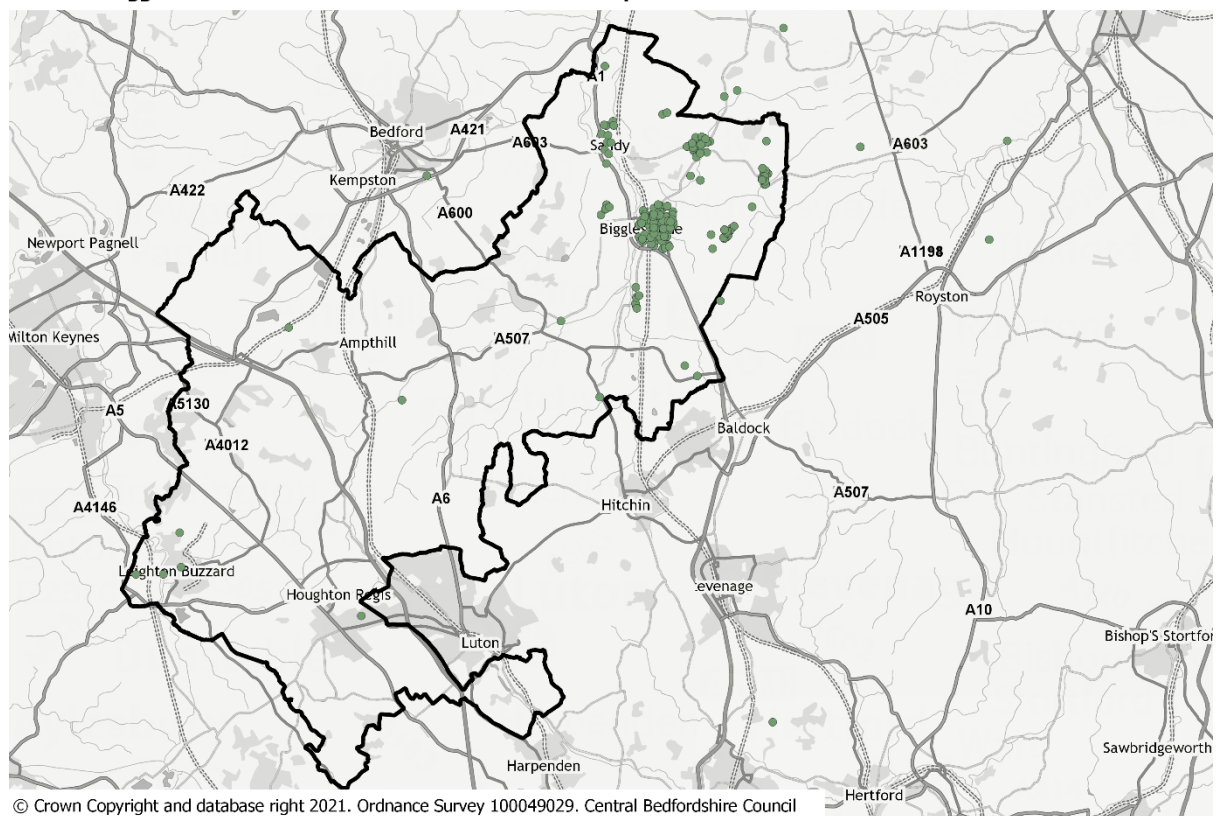


The 'other' responses provided were as follows:

- British-French
- White, human
- White irish
- White European
- polish
- White non-British, UK resident
- White, other (x4)
- EU white
- Do not wish to disclose
- Arab

## Postcode analysis

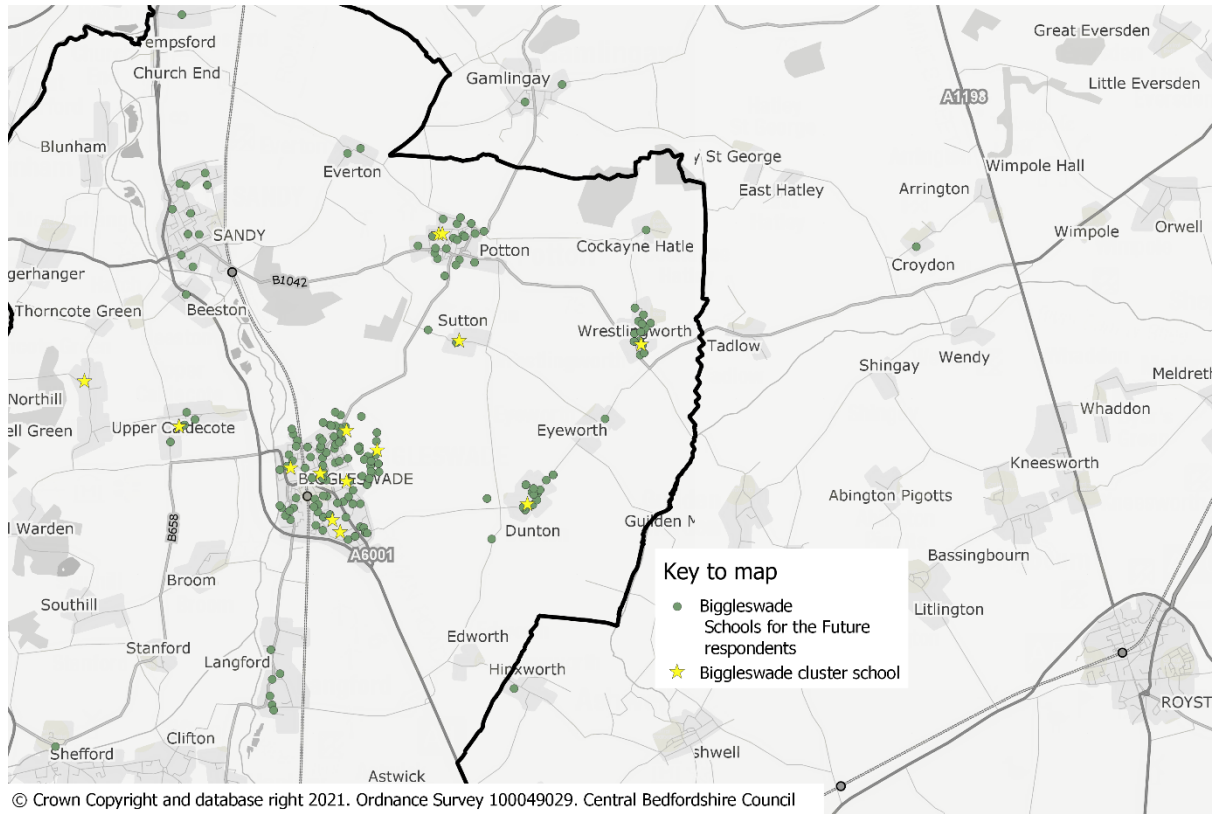
**Biggleswade Schools for the Future consultation respondents**



Responses were received primarily from the Biggleswade area – with some scattered across Central Bedfordshire and just across the border.



### Biggleswade Schools for the Future consultation respondents



### Mosaic analysis

Experian Mosaic band	Number of responses	% of responses (matched)	% of all CBC households	% of all Ivel Valley households	% of all Biggleswade parish households
Affluent	136	50%	46%	45%	30%
Middle	121	45%	38%	45%	53%
Deprived	14	5%	15%	10%	17%
<b>Total matched to Experian Mosaic</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

People from 'Affluent' households were more likely to respond, and those from 'Deprived' households were much less likely to respond, compared to the make-up of households in the area around Biggleswade (Ivel Valley locality).

## **Conclusion**

There is strong support for the long term plan (96% support), and strong support for the schools to work together to co-ordinate change (87%), however respondents are split on their support for the proposed move to two-tier schooling (58% support). Initial comments identified the need to keep education in the community and retain village schools, as well as the need to focus on the child and their education.

Support across the proposals for the individual schools was particularly varied. The schools which were most supported for their proposals were Caldecote CofE Academy, St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West, St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East and Northill CofE VA Lower School, all of which received 80%+ support.

### **Biggleswade Academy**

The proposal for Biggleswade Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 840 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 1010 pupils.

52% of respondents disagreed with the proposal for Biggleswade Academy – but comments indicated that they felt the school was more suited to being an all-through school (2-18 years old). Comments throughout the questionnaire also stated that the school is rated as good, and it is felt that Biggleswade Academy would be losing out in the switch to two-tier, to other schools that are rated as requiring improvement.

### **Caldecote CofE Academy**

The proposal for Caldecote CofE Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 168 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 120 pupils.

Caldecote CofE Academy had 100% support, but only a few responses. The comments received demonstrated issues about the need for transport to access the school from Biggleswade.

### **Lawnside Academy**

The proposal for Lawnside Academy is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 420 pupils, and scope to grow once relocated to the vacated Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site. The current capacity at the school is 300 pupils.

The school is proposed to relocate to the current Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School site which is 0.7 miles away from the current Lawnside Academy site.

Lawnside Academy saw 77% of respondents disagreeing with the proposal. Comments discussed the school's current Ofsted rating of requiring improvement, and whether or not it was a good idea for a school with that rating to increase its size.

### **Northhill CofE VA Lower School**

The proposal for Northhill CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.

Northhill CofE VA Lower School saw 80% of respondents supporting their proposal. The comments received were also supportive of the school converting to a primary school.

### **St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East**

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – East is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School East received 83% support for the proposal. The comments received were varied, covering general support, and the need for improvements to facilities if the school becomes a primary.

### **St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West**

The proposal for St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School – West is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 450 pupils.

St Andrew's CofE VC Lower School West received 85% support for the proposal. Comments were varied, covering general support, and the need for improvements to facilities if the school becomes a primary.

### **Sutton CofE VA Lower School**

The proposal for Sutton CofE VA Lower School is to convert to a primary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 105 pupils. The current capacity at the school is 75 pupils.

Sutton CofE VA Lower School received 61% support for the proposal. The 2 comments received were very different – however there was an underlying theme about the need for the school to make financial sense.

### **New Primary School (land East of Biggleswade)**

The proposal for a new primary on the land east of Biggleswade is that it will have a maximum capacity of 420 pupils.

The new primary school on the land east of Biggleswade saw 52% of respondents against the proposal. 20% of respondents were supportive of the proposal. Comments were mainly about having multiple schools east of town. This theme reappears at low levels throughout the responses for other questions.

### **Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools**

The proposal for Potton Lower School and Potton Middle School is for them to amalgamate and become a primary school for 2022/23, with a maximum capacity of 420 pupils. The current capacity at the lower school is 300 pupils, and current capacity at the middle school is 360 pupils.

The response for the proposal for Potton Lower and Potton Middle Schools were split, with 41% supporting and 41% against. Only 1 comment was received, which was supportive of the proposal.

### **Dunton CofE VC Lower and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower Schools**

There are three options being considered for the future of Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower school:

Option A - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School transition to primaries on their current sites with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option B - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamating as a 1 form of entry (30 places a year) primary school on the Dunton Lower site with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Option C - Dunton CofE VC Lower School and Wrestlingworth CofE VC Lower School amalgamate and relocate as the new 2 form of entry (60 places a year) primary in the brand-new school on land east of Biggleswade with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25

Dunton and Wrestlingworth saw the largest amount of responses per school in the consultation.

45% of respondents disagreed that the right factors were identified, citing that factors should include choice, sustainable transport and the ability to walk to school, being educated in your own community, the importance of schools in a rural community, Ofsted ratings of outstanding and the school's relationship with church.

91% of respondents want them to convert to primary schools on their own sites. Comments received reiterated comments seen above, the importance of the schools to their respective villages and how removing schools would turn them into dormitory or retirement villages. It would also remove choice for parents and for children that wanted or needed smaller schools or classes, the loss of two Ofsted outstanding schools, and the ability of being able to walk to school. There were some suggestions that Dunton and Wrestlingworth could be operated as a split site school – one site as an Infant school and one as a Junior school.

A separate consultation response was received from the Dunton and Wrestlingworth Church of England VC Lower Schools Federation citing that *“the Governing Body voted unanimously to support of Option A in the consultation, keeping both schools open and will be responding accordingly.”* The full response can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School**

The proposal for Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with an initial capacity of 900 pupils, with scope to grow. The current capacity at the school is 840 pupils.

Edward Peake CofE VC Middle School would move into the brand-new secondary school that will be built on land east of Biggleswade.

Respondents were split on the proposal for Edward Peake, with 42% supportive and 42% against. Comments were most likely to identify that a lot of money has been spent in recent years upgrading the current site, and it would be wasted to be converted to a primary as many facilities wouldn't be needed. Respondents also felt that the school should stay on its current site. There was also some support for the school to become a secondary school.

### **Stratton Upper School**

The proposal for Stratton Upper School is to convert to a secondary school with the earliest date of transition as 2024/25, with a maximum capacity of 1200 pupils (Years 7-11). The current capacity at the school is 990 pupils (Years 9-11).

73% of respondents supported the proposal for Stratton Upper School. There were comments detailing concern about the current reputation/Ofsted rating of the school. A letter from Stratton Community Farm CIC was also received in response to the consultation detailing their wish to *"create a care farm and horticultural space for Stratton students and Biggleswade residents"*.

### **Sixth form provision**

The proposal for sixth form provision is to create one sixth form for the area, open to pupils of both the existing Stratton Upper and Edward Peake schools. The sixth form would have a proposed capacity of 420 students (Years 12 and 13).

63% of respondents support the sixth form provision proposal. Comments were related to support of the proposal, as well as suggestions for multiple sites and to increase the offering – with some suggestions for more vocational options. There were also comments about Stratton as the current provider, that they have experience so should be able to run the sixth form for the area.

### **Overall comments**

For the overall comments, respondents were most likely to discuss the need to retain village schools (and the importance of the schools to the village communities), as well as supporting the plan for two-tier schooling.

There were also concerns raised about pupils and transitions/how it will work, and the importance of keeping parents up-to-date with the transition times.

## **Demographics of respondents**

The demographics of respondents saw females, and those aged 30-44 over-represented. Ethnicity broadly followed the Central Bedfordshire figures, and those with disabilities were under-represented. Affluent Mosaic groups were over-represented, and deprived groups were under-represented.

## Appendix 1

### Stratton Community Farm CIC consultation response

1. The Stratton Community Farm Community Interest Company owns buildings on land occupied by the now closed Stratton Upper School Farm. We wish to contribute to the consultation from this perspective.
2. The CIC has an ambition to secure tenure over part or all the land once occupied by the School Farm to reopen as a Community Farm or a dual use facility serving the Biggleswade school community (especially the proposed Stratton Secondary School and Ivel Valley School) and the wider community. Our aim is to create a care farm and horticultural space for Stratton students & Biggleswade residents at a time when mental health and food support needs are at an all-time high. We want to create a vital outdoor space where people can come together to grow plants and gain the benefits of being outdoors and interacting with animals; a place for learning skills and bringing education and health & wellbeing benefits to students and the community, while providing a supply of sustainable fresh produce for struggling families in Biggleswade to be distributed through the two Food Banks serving Biggleswade, including the neighbouring Kings Reach community. It is possible that the CIC will convert to a CIO to better attract the funding necessary to deliver this vision.
3. Stratton Community Farm CIC would seek to be part of the DfE's **Children in Nature programme: Growing Care Farming project**. This aims to expand and transform care farming services across England through a programme of central support, regional engagement, training, and quality assurance: a wonderful opportunity to transform the scale of the care farming sector across England, creating more opportunities for both children and adults with a defined need, to benefit from health, social and specialist educational care services delivered on care farms.
4. We note the intention to convert Stratton Upper School to a Secondary School and increasing capacity from 990 to 1200 students, as well as expanding Sixth Form provision. We understand from CMAT staff that this can be delivered within the footprint of the current school site and without impinging on use of the Farm Site.
5. We also note the now closed consultation on SEND provision in the area, and the intention expand the Ivel Valley School and to relocate it on a new site. The consultation is not explicit as to where this might be, but the School Farm site would be an obvious location, that offers potential co-benefits by locating it with Stratton School.
6. We believe the Farm site to be large enough to both accommodate relocation of the Ivel Valley School and a revitalised care farm that could supply (as in the past) vital services to students.
7. As a product of this consultation, the CIC asks that Central Bedfordshire Council (i) formally acknowledge its status as holding buildings located within the footprint of the now closed Upper School Farm and (ii) considers working with CMAT & DfE to grant the CIC tenure to c4acres to the south of the site to accommodate a Care Farm, to include the CIC buildings, ex-classroom & toilets, and associated hard standings and the orchard.

## Dunton and Wrestlingworth Church of England VC Lower Schools Federation consultation response

We wish to inform you and the Schools for the Future team that our Governing Body has met on Monday 6th September and voted to revoke our original decision in September 2019 to support the amalgamation of our schools onto the new site east of Biggleswade. We have done this for a number of reasons:

☑ In 2019 we were given no other options and it was clearly indicated by the then SFF team that the school would be built regardless of our decision and it would have an extremely negative impact on our schools. Further to that, it was indicated that funding to convert our schools to primaries would also not be offered and would have to be self funded.

- We feel and always have felt that we offered something unique and very different to a larger primary school, which as an environment is not always suited to all children. We now feel that this is reinforced by our high intake numbers for September 2021 and the very strong community support expressed in the independent petition.
- We feel that CBC is using the move to two tier to rationalise the school provision in the areas east of Biggleswade and this is not anything we originally agreed to when we voted to support the move to two tier.
- As church schools we feel we can offer the education originally intended for the parishes more effectively on our current sites. The proximity of the churches enables the pupils to regularly visit them and be an active part of the Church family; this would be lost if the schools were no longer situated in the villages.
- Both schools are on the DfE's designated rural schools list under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2020 and as such there must be considered a presumption against their closure. We feel that there is not a strong case for closure and further that closure would not be in the best interests to the provision of education in the local area of the villages and their catchment areas.
- The number of school places required still seems to vary and there is uncertainty around it. We feel that CBC can use our schools to fulfil any need before building the new school.
- There is uncertainty about the planning for the new development east of Biggleswade so our schools need to become primary schools as the new school may not be built.

In conclusion, in light of new information since the original decision was made, changing circumstances and strong local public support, we as a Governing Body no longer support the amalgamation of our schools onto the new site east of Biggleswade.

At the same meeting on Monday 6th September, the Governing Body voted unanimously to support of Option A in the consultation, keeping both schools open and will be responding accordingly.





**Central  
Bedfordshire**

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations)

**Email:** [consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)