



**SOMERSET**  
County Council

## Statutory proposal to re-organise schools within the Crewkerne and Ilminster area of Somerset

<b>Notice date:</b>	Wednesday 27 January 2021
<b>Proposer:</b>	Somerset County Council County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY

Notice is given in accordance with Part 2 Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Part 2 Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 together with the statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools' (October 2018) and 'Opening and closing maintained schools' (November 2019) that Somerset County Council ("the Council"), County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY intends to make prescribed alterations to the following maintained schools within the Crewkerne and Ilminster area of Somerset:

- Wadham School ("Wadham")
- Greenfylde Church of England First School ("Greenfylde")
- Merriott First School ("Merriott")
- Haselbury Plucknett Church of England First School ("Haselbury Plucknett")
- Ashlands Church of England First School ("Ashlands")
- St Bartholomew's Church of England First School ("St Bartholomew's")

and

- to discontinue Misterton Church of England First School ("Misterton"), and
- to discontinue Swanmead Community School ("Swanmead") to achieve an amalgamation with Greenfylde.

As part of an area-wide review of school provision in Crewkerne and Ilminster this statutory consultation invites interested parties to respond to the proposed changes to the structure of schooling in the area.

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## 1. How to respond to this formal consultation

This statutory consultation for the prescribed alterations to six maintained schools within the Crewkerne and Ilminster area of Somerset and the closure of two maintained schools will take place between 27 January 2021 and on 24 February 2021.

When the Statutory Consultation has finished, the Council's Cabinet will make a final decision on what will happen to schools in the area.

Consultation responses should be submitted before Wednesday 24 February at 5pm. You can make your views known in the following ways:

1. Through the online questionnaire available at [www.somerset.gov.uk/schoolsconsultation](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/schoolsconsultation)
2. In writing to us at 'Crewkerne and Ilminster Consultation, Somerset County Council, County Hall, The Crescent, Taunton TA1 4DY'.
3. By emailing us at [crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk)

You can also submit a public question to the following meetings:

4. The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday 3 March 2021 (date to be confirmed). [For more information about this process, click here.](#)
5. The Council's Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 17 March 2021. [For more information about this process, click here.](#)

Please note: All responses will be shared with the schools and academies concerned and the decision makers. Responses will be placed on public file and will be available for public inspection, unless you request otherwise.

## 2. Description of proposed changes

The Council proposes to change the current school system in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area of Somerset from a three-tier to two-tier system:

- a change of age range to six schools,
- a change to the published admission number where necessary,
- closure of one First school, and
- amalgamation of a First school and Middle school into a split site primary school which would require the closure of the Middle school and the significant enlargement of the First school.

The prescribed alterations or closure proposals for eight maintained schools are as listed below together with information about a proposed alteration to the published admission number at Hinton St George Church of England Primary School (“Hinton St George”) and a significant change proposal to Maiden Beech Academy from the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust.

Please note: the changes to a school’s published admission numbers below would be the subject of an application to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to vary the admissions arrangements for Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools for 2022/23. This variation would be sought only if these proposals are approved.

For more information on admission arrangements please see section 11 ‘Implementation Plan including admissions arrangements’ (page 30).

	<b>School</b>	<b>Proposed prescribed alterations and closure proposals</b> (including proposed changes to the published admission number)	<b>Implementation Date</b>
1	Wadham (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change of age range from 13-19 to 11-19.</li></ul>	September 2022

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The published admission number to reduce from 230 to 160 for year 7.</li> </ul>	
2	Swanmead (Community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amalgamation of Swanmead with Greenfylde to form a single split site primary school.</li> <li>This would be achieved by the closure of Swanmead and a significant enlargement of Greenfylde.</li> </ul>	September 2022
3	Greenfylde (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amalgamation of Greenfylde with Swanmead to form a single primary school.</li> <li>This would be achieved by the closure of Swanmead and a significant enlargement of Greenfylde.</li> <li>Change of age range from 4-9 (First) to 4-11 (Primary). This would be a split site primary school over the existing Greenfylde and Swanmead sites</li> <li>Significant enlargement from the current 380 places to 525 places.</li> <li>The published admission number to reduce to 75, a reduction of 1 from the existing Greenfylde limit of 76.</li> </ul>	September 2022
4	Merriott (Community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of age range from 4-9 (First) to 4-11 (Primary).</li> <li>The published admission number to decrease initially from 24 to</li> </ul>	September 2022

		10 for the first 4 years of operating as a primary school, with a subsequent increase to 20 from 2026.	
5	Haselbury Plucknett (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of age range from 4-9 (First) to 4-11 (Primary)</li> <li>• The published admission number to decrease initially from 12 to 8 for the first 4 years of operating as a primary school, with a subsequent increase to 12 from 2026.</li> </ul>	September 2022
6	Ashlands (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of age range from 4-9 (First) to 4-11 (Primary).</li> <li>• The published admission number to decrease from 30 to 10 for the first 4 years of operating as a primary school, with a subsequent increase to 20 from 2026.</li> </ul>	September 2022
7	St Bartholomew's (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of age range from 4-9 (First) to 4-11 (Primary)</li> <li>• The published admission number to decrease initially from 36 to 10 for the first 4 years of operating as a primary school, with a subsequent increase to 20 from 2026.</li> </ul>	September 2022
8	Misterton First (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To close the school.</li> <li>• Those pupils who are displaced to transition to a preferred nearby primary school.</li> </ul>	Closure at end of 2021/22 academic year

9	Hinton St George (Voluntary Controlled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The published admission number to decrease initially from 12 to 8 from 2022, with a subsequent increase to 12 in 2026.</li> </ul>	September 2022
10	Maiden Beech (Academy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of age range from 9-13 to 4-11.</li> <li>The published admission number proposed to be 30 from 2022. The current admission number as a middle school is 123 (<i>see below*</i>).</li> </ul>	September 2022

### **\*Consultation on significant changes to Maiden Beech Academy**

If the proposed changes to Local Authority maintained schools are approved, Maiden Beech Academy would be the only middle school which would be unviable. In order for this school to form part of these linked proposals, a significant change would need to be proposed by the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust.

The proposed change to Maiden Beech is included within this document in order to provide an overview of all the changes that are being considered across the Crewkerne and Ilminster area.

Academies are not under the control of the Council and any proposed significant changes are not subject to section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools', October 2018.

Academies and multi academy trusts are required to seek approval from the Regional Schools Commissioner for proposed changes to academy schools.

The proposed significant change to Maiden Beech Academy would be determined by the Regional Schools Commissioner. The proposed closures and prescribed alterations to the maintained schools and proposed significant changes to Maiden Beech Academy, as detailed within this document, are linked to one another.



This statutory consultation is not able to invite interested parties to respond to the proposed significant change to Maiden Beech Academy and comments regarding the proposed changes to the Maiden Beech Academy should be submitted to the academy concerned.

This survey has been compiled by the trust independently and separate from the local authority. The questions asked and information gathered are solely at the discretion of the Trust: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/55JM5BL](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/55JM5BL)

### **Scope of prescribed changes**

Three schools in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area are already primary schools and therefore outside of the scope of this consultation with regards to prescribed age-range changes.

The governing body of Hinton St George, following a consultation with all stakeholders of the school and the wider community (from 14 February 2020 to 15 March 2020), voted to accept the proposal to change the age range for Hinton St George from September 2020.

From September 2020, the school age range was extended to include year 5 pupils. It will be further extended to include year 6 pupils from September 2021. As the Local Authority is the Admissions Authority, if these proposals are approved, then a variation to the published admission number for September 2022 would be applied for in line with other changes to the published admission numbers that are being proposed for other schools in the area.

No changes are proposed to St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary School ("St Mary and St Peter's") or Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School ("Shepton Beauchamp"). Both schools became academies on the 1 April 2020 and are sponsored by the Bath and Wells Diocesan Academies Trust.

### **3. Evidence of need for proposed changes**

In 2019, an independent review into education provision in Crewkerne and Ilminster took place. That review found the current structure of schools was not sustainable and identified a range of different options for reorganising education within the area.

Pupil numbers in the area have been declining for many years. In January 2005, pupil numbers in the middle and upper schools were 1,550. On roll now in January 2021, there are 1,180 pupils on roll in these schools. While it is possible to operate a successful three-tier system, this depends on having sufficient pupil numbers to make the system financially viable. In Somerset, both Frome College and Kings of Wessex are financially viable upper schools however, both schools have over 1,000 pupils on roll each year, compared to fewer than 500 at Wadham. School viability for secondary aged pupils is determined not only by class size but by subjects offered. As pupil numbers decline, the available resources become insufficient to fund discrete teachers for curriculum subjects. In small secondary schools, the increased subject range in Years 10 and 11 can be subsidised by Years 7, 8 and 9. This option is not open to upper schools which begin at Year 9.

In the Crewkerne and Ilminster area, the reduction in pupil numbers is making the school system financially unsustainable. If no action is taken, then the financial pressures could have a highly detrimental effect on the quality of education that schools can offer. Quality of education is put at risk by the long-running and increasing, budgetary overspend at Wadham Upper School as a result of low pupil numbers. The Council previously wrote off accrued debt to the value of approximately £440k in 2012/13. Since that time the school has continued to accrue debt and on current projections is likely to reach approximately £1.8 million by the time these proposals would begin to take effect. Swanmead accrued a budgetary overspend (uncommitted revenue balance of approximately £86k) at the end of 2019/20. To date, the position of first schools in the area has been stable, but there are growing concerns about their future as small rural schools in an area where pupil numbers are low and numbers are not expected to increase significantly, taking into account planned housing developments. All the Local Authority maintained and voluntary controlled

schools with primary aged pupils affected by these proposals are predicting overspends in the current or future years due to low pupil numbers with a consequent impact on reserves and deficits.

The decision to review school organisation sits with the Council, because it has a legal duty to secure efficient and effective education in the area. The Council does not hold legal powers to execute every aspect of the current proposal, and it is therefore possible that other stakeholders might not cooperate in implementing proposals. However, the Council has been working cooperatively with the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Diocese of Bath and Wells, Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust and the Baths and Wells Multi-Academy Trust and to date all stakeholders, whether in agreement with the substance of the proposals or not, have remained committed to playing their part in any future changes for the good of children and the area.

#### 4. Results of pre-publication consultation

Between 12 June and 26 July 2019, the Council conducted a consultation on the following options:

- Option 1A: do nothing but prepare for growth in pupil numbers.
- Option 2: as option 1A but adjusting school formula funding.
- Option 3B: closing all small rural schools, consolidating with a smaller number of town primaries, and a single secondary school.
- Option 4A: close two small rural schools, split all other first and middle schools into infant/junior schools, and a single secondary school.
- Option 4D: as option 4A but with the closure of five small rural schools.
- Option 5C: close one middle school, provide middle and upper in two schools, retain all first schools.
- Option 5D: close both middle schools, provide middle and upper in a single school, retain all first schools.

Consultees were asked, first, to indicate the three most important things the Council should consider when determining the structure of schools in the area. Further, consultees were invited to indicate the degree to which they supported or not each option (options were Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The 2019 Consultation Exercise did not result in any clear preferences. The strongest positive feedback was for option 1A, although this also received an almost equal level of negative feedback. The strongest negative feedback was to option 3B, but all options were on balance negative, with option 5D being the most negative overall.

A further pre-publication consultation took place between Thursday 12 November and Friday 11 December 2020. During that time:

- 379 responses were submitted using the online questionnaire
- 25 written responses were received from stakeholder organisations
- 3 public petitions were received
- 286 members of the public joined live meetings with the Council representatives

Analysis of responses can be found [here](#).

The responses to this consultation demonstrated significant opposition to the proposals, as well as a smaller, but still significant level of support. The proportion of respondents broadly opposed to proposals ranged from around 49% and 74%, and those broadly in favour ranged from around 19% to 39%. Within the area, the need for change has been recognised and the possibility of reorganisation has been under active consideration for over ten years. In this time, active steps were taken by the local authority to develop a consensus, including providing funding to schools to develop alternative models. These steps did not result in a viable model that secured widespread support.

The clearest outcome of the 2019 consultation was that the community is divided on this topic, and there is no model of reorganisation that secures widespread support. Neither did the option of leaving things unchanged secure widespread support. The local authority has a statutory duty under sections 13, 13A and 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure the efficiency of education, to promote high standards and to ensure sufficiency of school places. Where the quality of education is at risk from no change, a solution must be pursued even if there is no single option that secures widespread support.

In the 2020 consultation, respondents identified a number of concerns and proposed a range of alternative options. The Council assessed the most critical and common concerns expressed. Further, the Council analysed the alternative options proposed. Overall, the Council assessed that the concerns expressed could be mitigated at least in part, or posed less of a risk than the current structure. Further, the Council assessed that none of the alternative options proposed by consultees were both viable, and more likely to result in high quality education than the current model being proposed. As a result, the Council decided to publish the current proposal.

## 5. Objectives - including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice

The proposal would see Wadham expanded. Wadham has seen a rapid trajectory of improvement in recent years and in the last published outcomes in 2019 was the highest performing school in the wider South Somerset / Dorset borders area.

School	Progress 8 score - 2019	% Pupils with a good pass in English and Maths GCSE - 2019
National average	0.0	43%
Wadham	+0.05	47%
Holyrood	-0.1	40%
Beaminster	-0.41	40%
Stanchester	-0.3	39%

The performance of pupils in the two middle schools in 2014 (the year that the 2019 pupils took their Key Stage 2 exams) were above average in Crewkerne but below average in Ilminster. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the improvement in outcomes to put Wadham above the national average represents a real improvement during years 9 to 11.

School	Reading, writing and maths expected standard (Level 4) 2014	Reading writing and maths Higher level (Level 5) 2014
National average	79%	24%
Ilminster	60%	13%
Crewkerne	83%	24%

## 6. The effect on other educational institutions within the area

The proposed change to Local Authority maintained schools is likely to have an adverse effect on Maiden Beech. By changing the age range of the first schools which feed into Maiden Beech, and by changing the age range of the upper school, it is likely that the current levels of pupils into the middle school would reduce or cease. If Maiden Beech remains as a middle school, it is likely that the implementation of the proposals would make the school unviable. This adverse impact would be mitigated if the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust were to change this school into a primary school, in line with the overall proposals for the area. The Trust is currently consulting on this change.

Hinton St George is a primary school with an admission number of 12 (September 2022). To retain this limit for September 2022, Hinton St George would be in an advantageous position in comparison to other schools in the area. For this reason, we also propose a change to the admission number so there is parity for this Hinton St George compared to Haselbury Plucknett, which is a school of similar size.

St Mary and St Peter's and Shepton Beauchamp are in the immediate vicinity of Ilminster. The Council has consulted closely with the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust and it has participated in the consultation process. The Trust has not identified any adverse impact, and neither is the Council aware of any likely adverse impact.

A number of parents choose schools outside of the three-tier system in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area. If the school system were to become two-tier, some of these pupils might choose to remain within the area, thereby resulting in lower pupil numbers in the schools outside the area. The secondary schools most likely to be affected, based on the October 2020 census, are: Stanchester Academy (fewer than 10 pupils); Huish Episcopi Academy (41 pupils); Holyrood Academy (59 pupils). Pupils also travel out of the area to attend Beaminster School in Dorset. Both Huish Episcopi and Holyrood are under pressure for places from within their local area. The potential reduction in pupil numbers from the Wadham catchment area would not have a detrimental impact on pupil numbers within these schools.

## **7. The closure of Misterton Church of England First School – including factors to be addressed when proposing a closure of a rural school**

The overall proposals include a proposal to close Misterton. The Department for Education (DfE) has designated Misterton as a rural school. The DfE expects all decision-makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This doesn't mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

The proposed closure of Misterton is linked to the other proposals in this document and does not stand alone in its own right.

### **Implementation**

The proposed implementation date for the closure of Misterton is 31 August 2022.

### **Reason for Closure**

The proposed closure of Misterton forms part of an area wide reorganisation of the school system in Crewkerne and Ilminster. If all first schools and the middle school were to become primary schools this would result in 1,200 places across Crewkerne and surrounding villages. Based on current information, the ceiling for possible growth in pupil numbers is 947 which is 253 places in excess of what would be needed even in the most ambitious scenario. Some schools can operate below maximum capacity, however, there is a limit to how much vacant space a school can manage before this becomes a financial risk. Therefore, it is not viable to pursue a model that retains all schools as each school would be at too great a risk of failure due to low pupil numbers. This means that at least one school is surplus to requirements.

The preliminary consultation in 2019 identified that it was a strong community preference to retain as many rural village schools as possible, therefore, this has been taken into account in assessing options.

The table below sets out the alternatives that have been considered in identifying Misterton for closure.



Closure of all first schools, Maiden Beech becomes the single primary	Dismissed on grounds that the community has clearly expressed that it is a priority to retain village and first schools. All schools in the area are subject to the presumption against the closure of rural schools.
Closure of Hinton St George	The building can support a three-class primary. The distance from nearest area school (Ashlands) is 2.8 miles (over 2 miles for pupils under 8 years and 3 miles for pupils over 8 years creates an entitlement to dedicated school transport which is likely to give rise to significant additional costs to the local authority).
Closure of Merriott	Merriott is a growing village, housing development means expansion is likely needed in future.
Closure of Haselbury Plucknett	The building can support a three-class primary. Distance from nearest area school (Ashlands or Misterton) is 2.4 miles (over 2 miles for pupils under 8 years and 3 miles for pupils over 8 years creates an entitlement to dedicated school transport).
Closure of Ashlands	The Crewkerne key site which is going through the planning process now is in North Crewkerne. Ashlands is the only school in North Crewkerne.
Closure of Maiden Beech	The maximum capacity at Maiden Beech is 492 and the maximum capacity of all other schools in the town and surrounding is 648. The minimum capacity in Crewkerne and surrounding villages needed to accommodate the existing forecast for pupil numbers is 691. Without places from Maiden Beech, the town would not have capacity to accommodate forecast pupils setting aside housing growth and this would very likely necessitate school building or expansion work. The local authority does not have powers to close academy schools and therefore a proposal based on the closure of Maiden Beech could face serious implementation barriers if the trust chose not to action the proposal.

<p>Closure of St Bartholomew's or closure of Misterton</p>	<p>If all schools become primary schools, the greatest excess of places would be in South Crewkerne and surrounding.</p> <p>St Bartholomew's maximum capacity is 210.</p> <p>Misterton maximum capacity is 60.</p> <p>Both schools would represent a loss of denominational places – this would be a greater loss if St Bartholomew's were to close.</p> <p>The greatest displacement of pupils would be with closure of St Bartholomew's.</p> <p>Proportion of pupils who attend their catchment school (St Bartholomew's) – 66%.</p> <p>Proportion of pupils who attend their catchment school (Misterton) – 57%.</p> <p>Misterton is located directly on the road with associated potential for air quality issues and traffic congestion</p> <p>St Bartholomew's is located off the road with dedicated parking and car access</p>
<p>Retain all schools and redistribute pupils from Maiden Beech allocation to Misterton</p>	<p>Maiden Beech capacity is 492. Under current proposals they would have a capacity of 210 pupils. If 60 were reallocated to Misterton, this would result in 140 pupils on roll at Maiden Beech. The building would be more than two thirds vacant.</p> <p>This is financially and operationally inadvisable as the school would not have sufficient funding with such a low intake to carry the cost of such a large site.</p> <p>For Misterton, this would result in a two-class school of 56 pupils. This would involve redirecting pupils out of Crewkerne as there are only around 30 pupils in the village. In past years the first preferences for this school were 5 in 2020, 1 in 2019, and in 2018 there were 3.</p> <p>A two-class primary negatively affects the ability of the school to deliver high standards and the minimum being proposed in the current model is three classes. This is because to avoid</p>

	<p>mixing key stages one class would be 24 pupils and the other 32.</p> <p>It would not be viable to allocate an intake of 4 to Misterton with one class of 28. This would also leave Maiden Beech with six classes which is not deliverable within the 30-pupil limit for Key Stage 1 without mixing key stages.</p>
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### **Pupil numbers and admissions**

The net capacity of Misterton is 60 places; the current admission number is 12. It is a mixed gender school. There is no specific provision for Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Misterton currently has 31 pupils on roll:

- Year R - 4 pupils
- Year 1 - 2 pupils
- Year 2 - 8 pupils
- Year 3 - 9 pupils
- Year 4 - 8 pupils.

### **Displaced pupils**

The proposal is to implement changes from September 2022. Pupils on roll that would be affected are those in current Years R, 1, 2 and 3 which is 23 pupils and any year R pupils that might admitted in September 2021.

Misterton is part of a Federation with Ashlands. If the proposal to close Misterton Church is approved all displaced pupils would be guaranteed a place at Ashlands. However, pupils would have the option to choose any local school and would be supported to do so. Ashlands could accommodate all displaced pupils from Misterton, as could St Bartholomew's.

### **SEND**

There are no pupils with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) currently attending Misterton. The number of pupils designated as SEND support is too low to be reported. Any pupils designated as SEND support would receive the same dedicated advice and guidance as other pupils to choose an appropriate local school.

## **Rural Primary schools**

The Council has had to regard to section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as explained in detail below. Further, the Council has had to regard to the DfE guidance on opening and closing maintained schools (November 2019). This provides that decision-makers should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. When producing a proposal to close a rural primary school, the proposer must consider:

- **The likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community.**

Concern has been raised that the closure of a village school would discourage families from moving to the village, however, data shows that a significant number of parents choose to live in the village now but send their children into other local school. There is already an early-years setting within Misterton (Misterton Pre-School). This setting is currently in difficulties due to low pupil numbers and is facing closure. This reinforces the wider issues facing the area and exemplifies the challenges in sustaining services for children within Misterton proper.

- **The proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community, for example is the school being used by the local community.**

Taking the number on roll from the October 2020 school census, Misterton had 31 pupils on roll, of which 17 lived in the catchment area (55%). The other 14 pupils travel to Misterton from Crewkerne. From the same census, the number of pupils living in the catchment area and attending a Somerset school was 30. There are 13 pupils living in Misterton who are choosing not to attend the local school.

- **Education standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools.**

Misterton was last inspected in March 2016 and was judged good. All the schools in the area under review are currently judged either good or outstanding.

The proposals overall are designed to safeguard the quality of education in a rural area. Without taking action, budgetary overspends would necessitate reducing the breadth of the curriculum, which would significantly disadvantage children and young people in the area overall.

- **The availability, and likely cost to the Council, of transport costs to other schools.**

The walking distances between Misterton and other local schools are as follows:

- St Bartholomew's                      1.3 miles (West)
- Maiden Beech                         1.7 miles (West)
- Ashlands                                1.9 miles (North West)
- Parrett and Axe (Dorset)        2.2 miles (South East)
- Haselbury Plucknett                2.4 miles (North)

The proximity of the village of Misterton to other local schools means that there are likely to be schools within two miles regardless of where in the village or surrounding area a child lives.

There may arise a need to provide transport for Misterton pupils displaced into a Crewkerne school for a transition period. The estimate for this time-limited cost is up to £36k. However, around half of Misterton pupils already reside in Crewkerne, and therefore depending on parental choices and where pupils choose to attend, the final cost could be significantly lower.

- **Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase.**

It is likely these proposals would have a negative impact on some families who would have longer travel to school. The Council's preferred mode of transport to school is for children to cycle or walk. This is better for the environment as well as being the best option for children's mental and physical health.

However, it is already the case that a significant number of families drive their children to school in Misterton. Of the 31 children currently attending Misterton, 14 live in one of the Crewkerne catchment areas (Ashlands or St Bartholomew's). The school is not ideally located from an environmental perspective, being on a busy main road with the potential for associated air quality and traffic safety implications.

Overall, it is not clear that the environmental impact would be significantly negative. While some children from Misterton would have longer travel distances, others would attend schools closer to home and be able to walk or cycle. St Bartholomew's (the nearest alternative school) is more appropriately located within green space, set back from the main road and with designated arrangements for parking and car access.

- **Any alternatives to the closure of the school.**

Misterton is already federated with Ashlands. As the case for closure depends on low pupil numbers across the area, collaborative groupings do not have the potential to mitigate the need for closure. Neither the current grouping nor any possible alternative grouping would create more pupils or change the nature of the area-wide issues.

There is clearly a negative impact on any rural village community to lose any facility and the Council is committed to preserving its villages and outstanding rural character. If Misterton closed as a school, it is not necessarily the case that it would be lost as a community facility. The Diocese of Bath and Wells has confirmed that they are the site trustee of the land on which the school building sit and the immediate surround but not the whole school site. The land is held on charitable trust and not publicly owned. As the consultation process, which may lead to the school's closure has only recently

been proposed, the Diocese are looking at alternatives as to its future. As with any charitable trust, however, the Diocese is obliged to obtain market value, whether rent or sale price, if the site is no longer used as a church school.

### **Balance of denominational provision**

As the proposed closure of Misterton is related to the other proposals in this document and does not stand alone in its own right, the table below shows the effect on primary denominational (church) places across the Crewkerne and Ilminster area.

<b>Crewkerne schools</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Current Capacity R to Y6</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity R to Y6</b>	<b>Current number of Denominational Places</b>	<b>Proposed number of Denominational Places</b>
Misterton	Voluntary Controlled	60	0	60	0
Merriott	Community	120	140	0	0
Haselbury Plucknett	Voluntary Controlled	60	84	60	84
Ashlands	Voluntary Controlled	148	140	148	140
St Bartholomew's	Voluntary Controlled	180	140	180	140
Hinton St George	Voluntary Controlled	84	84	84	84
Maiden Beech	Academy	246	210	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>898</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>448</b>
<b>Percentage of Denominational places</b>				59.2%	56.1%

<b>Ilminster Schools</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Current Capacity R to Y6</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity R to Y6</b>	<b>Current number of Denominational Places</b>	<b>Proposed number of Denominational Places</b>
Greenfylde	Voluntary Controlled	380	225	380	225
Shepton Beauchamp	Academy	72	70	72	70
St Mary and St Peter's	Academy	60	56	60	56
Swanmead	Community	174	300	0	300
<b>Totals</b>		<b>686</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>651</b>
<b>Percentage of Denominational places</b>				74.6%	100.0%

**Footnotes:**

- The proposal is to significantly enlarge Greenfylde to become a primary school across the two Ilminster schools' sites and this would increase denominational places in Ilminster.
- The current capacity R to Y6 has been calculated by taking 50% of the physical capacity of Maiden Beech and Swanmead.

Although the number of denominational primary school places would be reduced in Crewkerne this would be offset by the increase in denominational primary school places in Ilminster. Under the current three tier system Merriott is the only community school in the Crewkerne area and under these proposals the proposed primary school at Maiden Beech would provide non-denominational places in the town. At secondary level Wadham is voluntary controlled and if the age range is extended then further secondary denominational places would be created in years 7 and 8. Currently both Middle schools provide non-denominational places.



## **8. Process to achieve an amalgamation of two schools – Greenfylde and Swanmead**

The proposal is to close Swanmead and significantly enlarge Greenfylde to take years 5 and 6. The Swanmead site would transfer to the new school (using Greenfylde's registration) and this new primary school would operate over the two sites. However, while it would be Greenfylde that retained its registration, it is not proposed that Greenfylde become the only school. Subsequent to a decision to implement, and prior to implementation, the proposal is that the two governing bodies would establish a hard federation in the first instance with a governing body made up of members from the two extant governing bodies, and would recruit a single Executive Headteacher over both schools. This leadership would appoint a single merged staffing structure and would facilitate the amalgamation. The new school would have a new name to signal that it was a new primary school and not a continuation of one of the two schools only.

Proposed date of closure 31 August 2022.

### **Reason for closure**

To achieve an amalgamation with Greenfylde to create a 4-11 primary school over a split site.

### **Pupil numbers and admissions**

The pupil capacity in Swanmead is 348 and the number on roll as at January 2021 is 287 with a current admission limit of 87. It is a mixed gender school with no special classes.

### **Displaced pupils**

If approved Swanmead would close on 31 August 2022. Pupils in year 6 and 7 (on the 31 August 2022) would transfer to Wadham in Crewkerne. Pupils in year 5 would automatically be enrolled at the new primary school created by the amalgamation of Greenfylde and Swanmead and would not experience displacement.

### **Impact on the community**

Both school sites in the town would remain in use so there would be no loss of educational facilities. Education in the town would stop at year 6 rather than year 8 which would result in pupils within the town travelling longer distances in order to access education during years 7 and 8, see below.

Greenfylde includes early years provision that is governed under the community governance regulations. A hard federation could apply to lower the age range of the new primary school to include early years. This does not form part of these proposals but has been considered and would be a suitable action for the governing body to undertake as part of implementing a new primary school from September 2022.

A concern raised by respondents to the consultation was that there is a shortage of wraparound care in the town, as this is only available for pupils attending Greenfylde and not those attending Swanmead. While provision of wraparound care is a matter for the local governing body, the amalgamation of the two schools offers an opportunity to remedy this gap.

### **Balance of denominational provision**

See table on pages 23-24.

### **SEND**

Provision for pupils with SEND would be continuous as the proposed change is an amalgamation of two existing schools. Respondents to the consultation raised concerns that a larger school would result in lower quality provision for pupils with SEND and/or other vulnerabilities. There is no evidence that larger primary schools are less likely to provide outstanding support for pupils with additional needs. Both schools proposed for amalgamation are good or outstanding, and therefore a successor school would draw on the expertise of existing staff and quality of practice in these schools. Support would be provided by the local authority during the transition period to ensure all pupils with additional needs were identified and tracked through a period of change.

## **Travel**

There would be no impact on travel to school for pupils in year 5 and 6. Pupils in years 7 and 8 would be entitled to home to school transport to Wadham in Crewkerne. Respondents to the consultation expressed concern about the negative impact that the expansion of school transport would have on pupils and parents. Specifically, there was concern due to the current inability of the upper school to provide dedicated school transport at a time to allow for participation in after school extra-curricular activities. In order, to mitigate this impact, it has been agreed with Wadham that the additional investment by the local authority that would be required to facilitate the expansion in dedicated school transport would be used to provide a later bus after the end of the school day. This would improve access to extra-curricular activities for all pupils, and not only those in years 7 and 8.

## **9. Project costs and how these would be met, including how long-term value for money would be achieved**

Estimates have been undertaken of the key areas of potential financial expenditure that could be associated with these proposals.

- Redundancy – between £50k and £359k
- School Transport – circa £198k annually
- Refurbishment (school estate) – up to a maximum of £1.3million
- Access from Misterton to Crewkerne, either a) additional school transport (circa £24k annually) or b) any required walking route safety works subject to the outcome of an engineering feasibility study and where this is a more economic option than option A over a twenty-year repayment period.

The costs of no change continue to rise. The current estimate is that the structural deficit for Wadham is projected to reach £1.8 million by 2022 and would continue to grow at a rate of around £400k each academic year. While the financial outturn for first schools in the area will not be known until mid-2021, the current information suggests that there are financial concerns across the area. While some schools are currently operating surpluses, at current forecasts these could be significantly reduced, and some schools could return deficits.

The Council has submitted a bid (not yet granted) to its Capital Programme for adaptations in the current financial year (2020/21). A companion bid has also been submitted for investment in condition works in the area. There is a significant backlog of maintenance issues relating to schools in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area. In the context of this consultation, there is a potential opportunity to align building condition improvement with other refurbishment of schools in the area which could be needed to facilitate re-organisation. This proposal would provide a total of £5,112,600 for the three-year period 2021/22 to 2023/24, if a decision to proceed with re-organisation was taken. This would not be costs of change, however, it would bring much needed investment into the area and help secure the quality of education for the future.

## 10. Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equalities Impact Assessment was included as part of the report for the Non-Key Decision to proceed to a Statutory Consultation. This can be found [here](#).

## 11. Implementation Plan including admissions arrangements

The proposed implementation date is September 2022. The table below illustrates the impact on pupils based on their year group for this academic year (2021-22).

What year group is a child in? (School year group as at September 2021)	Sept 2022	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	Sept 2025	Sept 2026	Sept 2027	Sept 2028
<b>Year R</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of year 6 into secondary school	Year 1 at Primary	Year 2 at Primary	Year 3 at Primary	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary
<b>Year 1</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of year 6 into secondary school	Year 2 at Primary	Year 3 at Primary	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary
<b>Year 2</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of year 6 into secondary school	Year 3 at Primary	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary
<b>Year 3</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of year 6 into secondary school	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary
<b>Year 4</b> Stay in same school then transfer at the end of year 6 into secondary school	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary
<b>Year 5</b> Stay in same school then transfer at end of year 6 to secondary school	Year 6 at newly formed primary/junior school	Year 7 at Secondary school	Year 8 at Secondary school	Year 9 at secondary school	Year 10 at secondary school	Year 11 at secondary school	
<b>Year 6</b> Transfer at the end of year 6 to secondary school	Year 7 at secondary school	Year 8 at secondary school	Year 9 at secondary school	Year 10 at secondary school	Year 11 at secondary school		
<b>Year 7</b> Transfer to secondary school	Year 8 at secondary	Year 9 at secondary school	Year 10 at secondary school	Year 11 at secondary school			
<b>Year 8</b> Transfer to secondary school	Year 9 at secondary	Year 10 at secondary school	Year 11 at secondary school				

The implementation plan involves nine strands (see below). These strands would be overseen by an internal project group within the Council, a coordinating group of school leaders and chairs of governors, and a Steering Group of system leaders and employers made up of: the Council; the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office; the Diocese of Bath and Wells; Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust (BTCT); and Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (BWMAT). These bodies have already been constituted in other forms to coordinate activity during the period of consultation and decision-making and would be refreshed and reconstituted with new terms should a decision be taken to proceed with implementation.

### **11.1 Refurbishment and condition works**

Three schools have been identified for priority refurbishment works should proposals be approved: Swanmead; Maiden Beech; and Ashlands. A bid has been submitted to the Council's capital programme to meet the estimated costs of unavoidable refurbishment of £1.3 million, conditional on a decision by Cabinet on these proposals.

The decision-making process would be as follows:

1. Instruct feasibility (and surveys) – January 2021
2. Full Council approves 21/22 capital bid – 17 February 2021
3. Cabinet decision and delegation of agreement to tender – 17 March 2021
4. Headteachers Board (significant change decision) – April 2021
5. Tender – April to July 2021
6. Delegated decision to award contract – July 2021
7. Appointment of contractor – August 2021
8. Design – August to December 2021
9. Construction – January to July 2022.

The DfE provides an annual capital grant to support the local authority's duty to ensure that school buildings are maintained in an appropriate condition and are safe and compliant. However, increasingly the level of funding provided through the DfE is proving to be insufficient to meet the level of high priority need in Somerset. Therefore, a bid has been submitted to decision-makers with the Council to ensure that the highest priority works can be addressed. The DfE grant funding for 21/22 has not yet been announced but has been assumed to be £3,100,000 for the purposes of this proposal. The Council is being asked to invest a further £1,471,600.

There is a significant backlog of maintenance issues relating to non-academy schools in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area. If a decision was taken to proceed with implementation, building condition improvement could be aligned with refurbishment works. This would provide a total of £5,112,600 for the three-year period 2021/22 to 2023/24.

## 11.2 Admissions

### **Ilminster**

It is proposed that the Council would amalgamate Swanmead and Greenfylde to create a new primary school over an enlarged split site. The catchment for the new Primary school would be the same as current catchment area of Greenfylde. The published admission number for Greenfylde would be varied for September 2022 from 76 to 75. A published admission number of 75 makes it easier to ensure that the statutory class size limit of 30 for Reception and Key Stage 1 is maintained.

### **Crewkerne**

In Crewkerne, to achieve a transition from a three-tier system to a two-tier system, reception admissions numbers would need to be adjusted. In becoming primary schools, the new primary schools would need to take a smaller number of pupils for a period of time during the transition period. All the schools have been allocated a 'target' intake in the proposal, which is the number they would reach by the end of transition. If they took the targeted intake numbers at the outset it would mean they would grow too large for their accommodation. At the same time, Maiden Beech would have a higher intake at first, which would allow the school to establish pupil numbers quickly, otherwise it would be very small in numbers for too long.

Proposed published admission numbers for the reception intake September 2022:

- Ashlands – 10 (currently 30)
- St Bartholomew's – 10 (currently 36)
- Merriott – 10 (currently 24)
- Hinton St George – 8 (currently 12)
- Ashlands – 8 (currently 12)

The proposed published admission number suggested by the Council to the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust for Maiden Beech Primary school is 30.

Wadham currently has a published admission number of 230, although in reality admissions have been well under this figure at around 150 per year, illustrating the impact that falling rolls have had over time. The proposed published admission



number for Wadham as a secondary school for September 2022 is 160 which reflects a maximum capacity of 800. This number would be reviewed annually.

The proposal is that catchment areas would remain the same for all Local Authority schools. However, it has been suggested to the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust that, for a Maiden Beech Primary School, they remove the priority for catchment pupils from the over-subscription criteria so that all children who do not fall into a higher criteria (for example, Looked After Child, siblings, etc) are prioritised under the final criteria of distance to school as a straight line measurement. This is the simplest solution and it avoid the probability of unfair or perverse outcomes for pupils in admissions which could arise from redrawing boundaries. The new primary schools would retain their existing first school catchment areas as there is no benefit to be gained by changing them.

It is proposed that Misterton would close and therefore it would be necessary for its catchment area to be incorporated by another school. The proposal is that this would be St Bartholomew's as the nearest school.

Changes to 2022/23 admission arrangements must be consulted on for six weeks by 31 January 2021. The decision on whether this proposal will go ahead is proposed to take place on 17 March 2021. So, in order to make any changes to admission arrangements, it would be necessary to seek a variation from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator on the grounds of a major change in circumstances. A variation would only be applied for in the event that Cabinet makes a decision to implement these proposals.

In the pre-publication consultation, some respondents expressed concern that lower published admission numbers as part of the transition planning would affect siblings negatively. In the published local authority admission arrangements, priority is given for siblings where there is an existing sibling link at the time of admission. However, no guarantee is ever given that siblings can attend the same school when the school is over-subscribed.

In any year, for schools where the local authority is the admissions authority it will consider whether admissions over the limit can be accommodated. This will be looked at on a case by case basis and in a dialogue with the school. Parents also have a right of appeal.

There would be a risk that with a lower published admission number that more siblings may not get a place than would ordinarily be the case. In the context of this reorganisation, the local authority would commit to securing a place for catchment siblings during the transition years where the admission number was lower (to 2026), even if this took the school intake over the admission number. Out-of-catchment siblings are never guaranteed a place, and this would be the same in this context.

### **11.3 Staff restructuring**

A draft restructuring timeline has been devised and is set out below which would form a starting place for planning staff reorganisation. The timeline is entirely provisional at this stage and seeks to achieve implementation with effect from September 2022 whilst also meeting the contractual and statutory notice provisions as set out within the terms and conditions of employment for both teaching and non-teaching staff.

The draft timeline can be subject to revision and allows for some amendments to be made to the dates of the first three stages should a decision be taken to proceed with implementation however, should the decision be taken to proceed the redundancy procedure would need to be invoked by mid-March 2022 at the latest.

Any revision to the timeline would be subject to negotiation with all employers and trade unions prior to finalisation.

Note that this draft timeline does not include the timescales for training and development as there is another strand dedicated to this work.

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible for action</b>
1 September 2021 – 31 October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All schools to submit current staffing structure and proposed structure for September 2022 to Steering Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headteacher and Chair of Governors for each setting.</li> </ul>
1 November 2021 – 31 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and finalise posts “at risk” and vacant posts to be appointed to within the new structure.</li> <li>Identify which schools would need to invoke the redundancy process and agree panels for these.</li> <li>Share proposals with recognised trade unions and professional associations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headteachers in consultation with HR and members of Steering Group.</li> <li>HR Adviser in conjunction with Headteacher and Chair of Governor.</li> <li>Steering Group with support from HR.</li> </ul>
1 January 2022 – 25 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch formal consultation process and associated redundancy processes with staff and unions.</li> <li>Expressions of interest sought for Voluntary Redundancy (VR) / redeployment to vacant posts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headteachers and Chair of Governors supported by HR.</li> </ul>
7 March 2022 – 31 March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection process to appoint to vacant posts (including ringfenced posts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel members as identified above with HR Adviser to support process.</li> </ul>
4 April 2022 – 8 April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written confirmation of redundancy issued to staff who are unsuccessful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headteacher or Chair of Governors with HR support.</li> </ul>

9 May 2022 – 20 May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any appeals against redundancy to be heard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governor panel with HR support.</li> </ul>
23 May 2022 – 27 May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal notification of redundancy issued.</li> <li>Confirmation of appointments issued to staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authority/ MAT.</li> <li>Headteacher or Chair of Governors with HR support.</li> </ul>
1 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New structure goes live.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All.</li> </ul>

#### **11.4 Leadership and creation of a hard federation in Ilminster**

The proposed new primary school in Ilminster would require the appointment of a substantive Headteacher. In order to support this process and the creation of the new staff structure for the school, the creation of a hard federation is proposed between the existing governing bodies with effect from September 2021. The creation of a hard federation would provide a mechanism to support the Headteacher to not only design the staffing structure but also implement this in readiness for September 2022.

A hard federation can only be entered into voluntarily by the governing bodies of the relevant schools. Initial discussions have been held with the Chairs of both Governing Bodies who recognise the merits of such an approach in providing leaders with the governance needed to operate over two schools in advance of amalgamation, should a decision be taken to implement proposals. A six-week consultation period regarding the creation of a hard federation would be required and it is proposed this would be launched by the end of May 2021, at the latest, in order to achieve a September start.

To achieve the creation of a hard federation by September 2021 a Joint Working Group (JWG) with representatives from both existing governing bodies would need to be established. The priorities for the JWG would be to establish how the appointment to the Headteacher post would take place for example, an internal advert ringfenced for the current Ilminster Headteachers, or external national advert. Representatives from the Diocese and the Council would be part of the selection process, alongside the

process and consultation of the hard federation of the governing bodies for the federation to be established by September 2021.

Ideally, it would be beneficial for the appointment of the new Headteacher to have been completed by end of May 2021 to enable the successful candidate to be in post from September 2021 and therefore able to lead on the staffing restructure. However, it is recognised that this is unlikely to occur should a decision be taken by the JWG to go to external advert. A start date of January 2022 is more likely in this scenario. It is anticipated the Headteacher designate would work with the federated governance board during the autumn half term to determine the staffing structure ready to implement in the Spring term when they would formally take up post.

### **11.5 Staff training and education development**

A strength of the current system is the number of subject specialists available to teach primary-aged pupils. In the pre-publication consultation, a number of respondents wanted to see this retained. Concerns were also expressed by staff in the middle schools that they did not have sufficient understanding of other phases of education to confidently transition to new roles.

The process of whole area training and development would have the following stages:

#### **Stage 1 – Skills audit – Summer 2021**

This would be a voluntary exercise across all staff in the area, including those whose roles would be less likely to be affected by any changes. The skills audit would focus on: general knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum; SEND general knowledge and specialism; behaviour management; subject specialism; and assessment.

#### **Stage 2 – Phase familiarisation and whole staff development – Summer 2021 to Autumn 2021**

It is advantageous for any educationalist to have an advanced understanding of other phases of education. Following the skills review, training and development would be made available to support all staff to develop their familiarity with other phases. An assessment would be made of the skills audit and priorities agreed with school leaders

for the provision of general training and development where needed to supplement or align pre-existing school-based programmes.

### **Stage 3 – Individualised training needs and review of primary practice – Autumn 2021 to Summer 2022**

Once it was known which individuals would be directly affected, the skills audit would be used to assess whether individuals had a need for tailored training or development to enable them to secure a comparable role in another settings. During this period the usual line management discussions about individual training needs would occur, however, additional support would be available should this be needed to help secure a role in a new structure.

During this time, new and existing leadership teams would be encouraged to review their approach to primary practice, and the Council would facilitate area-wide discussions about the use of subject specialism to enhance primary education.

A coalition of partners in Somerset has recently submitted a bid to form a Teaching School Hub for the county. This was part of a sub-regional exercise that covered five local authority areas. The aim of the Teaching School Hub would be to coordinate workforce development and create a unified approach to expertise across all schools. A project in Crewkerne and Ilminster would seek to align with this emerging programme so that any development activity would have wider application and value.

### **11.6 Financial planning**

A suite of draft financial principles has been provisionally agreed with key stakeholders to guide the implementation process. The principles are set out below:

#### **Overarching**

Where change has arisen as a result of the Council undertaking its statutory obligation to secure efficient education within the local area, the local authority recognises its obligations to facilitate this process financially.

- **Principle 1:** Unavoidable costs that would not have arisen except as a result of the decision to undergo reorganisation would be met by the Council.

## Workforce

The rationale for the structural change is to make the system more sustainable for the future, however, the change is not for the purpose of reducing the workforce. Therefore, the reorganisation project would establish criteria for workforce reorganisation that are based on the assumption that existing staff would be re-deployed within the Ilminster/Crewkerne area where possible.

- **Principle 2:** Complete school staffing structures and baseline staffing costs would be shared with the Council's project team at the point of project initiation.
- **Principle 3:** Where redundancy arises because the alternative would be a new school structure that was significantly unaffordable or would be detrimental to pupil outcomes, then those costs would be considered unavoidable.
- **Principle 4:** Where redundancy arises because there is no reasonably appropriate post in any organisation within the Ilminster/Crewkerne area, those costs would be considered unavoidable. However, if an organisation chooses not to appoint where the appointment is reasonable, this would not be considered unavoidable costs and the organisation that has taken the decision not to appoint would be expected to meet the costs of redundancy, even though they are not the current employer.

## Refurbishment

- **Principle 5:** The Council would commission an independent assessment of the unavoidable costs of refurbishment in each school to accommodate age-range changes in each school. This assessment would not consider condition amelioration that would otherwise be required.
- **Principle 6:** The unavoidable costs of refurbishment for Maiden Beech would be paid to Bridgwater College Trust with the expectation that refurbishment be contracted by the Trust.
- **Principle 7:** Where refurbishment has been identified as necessary to accommodate age-range changes in a Local Authority maintained or voluntary controlled school, an assessment would be made of the added value that could be secured by undertaking building condition works in conjunction with refurbishment.

Where additional funds are available to support this work in schools' reserves there would be an expectation of a proportionate contribution to the overall cost of the programme. If capital receipts are realised as a result of these proposals it is anticipated that these would be reinvested in other schools in the area.

The local authority is under obligation to increase recycling and decrease waste in the local area. For this reason, the structural change project would seek to redeploy equipment across the local area where it becomes redundant.

- **Principle 8:** Schools would be expected to identify equipment that have become redundant. These would be pooled and redistributed according to need where they meet minimum standards of suitability and condition. Where equipment has been made available this would be considered to mitigate unavoidable costs. Where redeployment is not possible then the costs of equipment would be considered unavoidable and would be included in the overall refurbishment assessment.

The changing admission numbers that are proposed for new primary schools in Crewkerne would result in schools in the area having to manage lower pupil numbers for a number of years during transition. Without transitional funding, this could result in an inability to maintain staffing levels.

Transitional funding would be made available. The government guidance allows for variations in the number of pupils on roll due to reorganisation. The Schools Forum Technical Working Group is looking at the criteria for use of the Growth Fund, as Schools Forum is the decision-making body for this spending. These would be finalised should this progress. Schools in this situation would, within the formula funding allocations, be guaranteed a minimum number of pupils based on the pupil numbers of other Somerset schools of the target size (for example, 3, 5 or 7 classes). Implementation planning would include support for schools to review and re-plan a multi-year budget on the basis of actual pupil number projections and the guaranteed minimum number of pupils.



## **11.7 Transport planning**

Transport costs vary according to individual pupil need, year by year, however, the proposals, if implemented would result in two additional year groups requiring transport from Ilminster to Crewkerne to attend Wadham. If proposals were implemented, the additional investment would make it possible to secure a later returning bus into Ilminster for pupils in all year groups. Wadham has given a commitment that it would organise after school activities in such a way as to respond to this opportunity. This would improve the educational opportunities offered to any pupil living in Ilminster and travelling to Wadham.

Travel assistance would be provided for pupils currently attending Misterton to their new school if this school was within the local area and if this school was over the statutory walking distance from their home address (2 miles for children aged under eight years and 3 miles for children aged eight years and over).

St Bartholomew's is the next nearest school to Misterton and pupils living in the Misterton catchment area are likely to be under the statutory walking distance of the school from their home address (2 miles for children aged under eight and 3 miles for children aged eight and over) and therefore there would be less requirement for travel assistance. Further assessment by the Council's engineering team is required to determine whether works might be undertaken on the walking route between Misterton and Crewkerne.

From September 2022, it is proposed that the Misterton catchment area and designated transport area would be incorporated by St Bartholomew's.

The designated transport area from Maiden Beech would be removed and travel assistance entitlement will be assessed on nearest school basis only.

The designated transport area for a new Primary School in Ilminster would be the same as the current catchment area for Greenfylde.

### **11.8 Pupil transition planning (including displaced pupils in Misterton)**

The transfer of pupils into new schools, for example from middle schools into a new secondary school, would have to happen at the same time. This is because making the change would require reorganisation of staff across schools, and this can only be done fairly if all staff across both areas have the opportunity to apply for vacancies created by a restructure at the same time.

There would be around 450 pupils who would need to transition into Wadham at the same time if proposals were implemented. If all pupils had to be inducted at the same time this could create a challenging environment. To mitigate this, the process of induction and familiarisation for pupils would be phased, starting in autumn term 2021.

The process of supporting pupils in Misterton to find a new school home would begin in Autumn 2021. This would enable places to be finalised in advance of cyclical admissions which, for primary-aged pupils, takes place in January. All schools operate open days during autumn term, which would also be made available to parents of Misterton pupils. Any parents concerned about the transition process or needing additional help and support would have an opportunity to request this from officers with specialist expertise, such as SEND.

### **11.9 Pupil number modelling**

The Council develops pupil forecasts to allow for long-term planning. These forecasts are published online. The last published forecast was in March 2020 which used baseline data from the October 2019 school census and as such are referred to as the 2019 School Population Forecasts.

To inform this process, an update was developed with latest intelligence which is current up to mid-September 2020. Pupil forecast numbers will be updated again in March 2021.

The Council uses DfE guidance for these forecasts. The guidance puts conditions on what can and cannot be considered.

Although the DfE guidance does recommend the use of District Councils' five-year housing land supply data, they are also clear that there must be a degree of certainty that the dwellings will be completed within the forecast period. For the 2019 School Population forecasts this is 2019-2024. It is not possible to include a housing development that has not been included in a five-year housing land supply paper without at least an application having been submitted for a proposed development.

A ten-year plan has been created to model proposed pupil numbers in each school in each year of the transition period. This plan rests on current modelling and forecasts but would be continually reviewed and updated over the length of the transition period, including any implications for published admission numbers.

The pupil modelling provided here differs slightly from the pupil modelling included with the pre-publication consultation. This version now includes two models for Crewkerne:

1. Ashlands taking Misterton displaced forecast pupils.
2. St Bartholomew's taking Misterton displaced forecast pupils.

This has been updated to show that it is possible for either school to accommodate all Misterton pupils. It must be emphasised that this is solely to demonstrate that space is available at either school. Every pupil would be given the opportunity to express a preference for any local school.

The local authority will continue to work closely with South Somerset District Council so that the most up to date housing trajectories can be considered in our planning. Forecasts always involve uncertainty, both about whether these things will happen at all, and if they do happen, when the pupils will arrive in local schools. The growth in pupil numbers is not guaranteed in any area. However, given the level of housing that is being proposed for Crewkerne, additional pupil numbers arising from new developments is likely.

In the Crewkerne area, there are currently planning applications for approximately 940 houses of which around 800 have yet to be included in our published forecasts. Based

on the Council's pupil yield for new housing, which is 32 primary aged pupils per 100 dwellings then 800 new homes could yield a further 256 primary aged pupils. 800 new homes could also yield a further 112 secondary aged pupils (14 secondary aged pupils per 100 dwellings).

During the transition period, the three principal areas of potential development which would have a direct impact on these proposals would be plans in North Crewkerne, Merriott and Ilminster. These proposals have been developed to complement the possibility of housing development in these areas specifically, however no assumptions have been made about what might be realised, as all housing development planning is highly subject to change and delay.

**ENDS**

### **More help**

To request this document in an alternative format please, email your request to [crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk)