

The Future of Shelton Lower School – Statutory Notice

Consultation results

By
Knowledge & Insight



Purpose of consultation

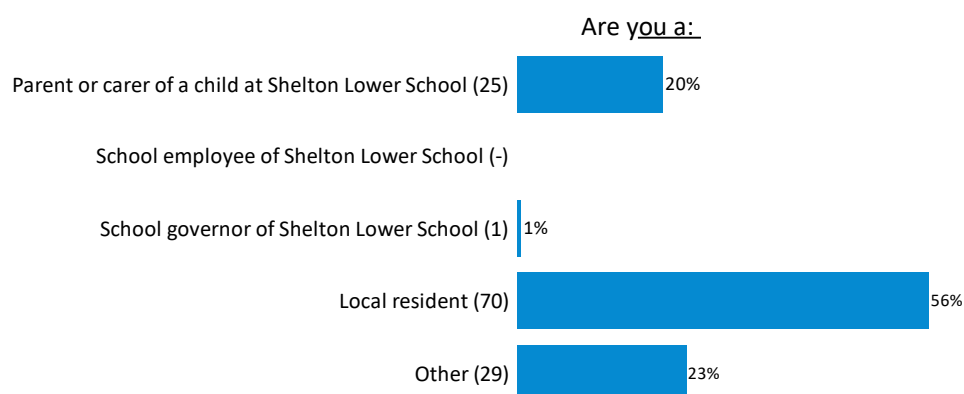
Shelton Lower School is a small rural lower school in the village of Upper Shelton. The school has an overall pupil capacity of 75 pupils but has not been full for a number of years and unfortunately this decline is forecast to continue. Only four children's parents have requested a place in the September intake out of a total admission number of 15. Shelton Lower School has, this year, gone into a budget deficit position and this looks set to worsen.

The governors alerted the council to the deteriorating financial situation in February 2018. The council has been providing financial support to the school and exploring possible options. At present there seems to be no prospect of recovery and therefore the future of the school must be considered.

The council has to follow statutory guidance if consideration is being given in relation to the possible closure of a school. The statutory notice consultation is the second stage in the process. Parents, local residents and stakeholders were invited to give their views.

Feedback on proposal

A total of 125 responses were received. The greatest number of responses, 70, were from local residents (56%), followed by 25 responses from parents with children at the school (20%). There were also 29 respondents (23%) who marked 'Other'.



The other responses are primarily from other family members of children either at, or of an age to be at Shelton Lower, or residents in the area around Shelton Lower. They were as follows:

If other, please specify:

Parent of pupils at federated school

Resident of Flitwick

Live in C Beds

Council tax payer

Headteacher

Grandmother of two pupils and mother of an employee

Relative of pupil

Childminder
Parent of child not at Shelton
I live in Wootton
Close friend of a parent of a child at Shelton Lower School
My niece goes to this school
grandparent
Ex local resident
Parent of children within next village
Used to reside in Marson Moretaine and have family and friends still in and around the area
Live in Kempston
Childminder
Resident of Marston Moretaine with a child whom we are looking for a school place for September 2019
Resident of wootton
Parent in Bedfordshire
Parent of a child due to start september 2018
Grandparent of child at the school
Parent of ex-pupil
I live nearby so any closure will affect the numbers of the school I use
Child about to turn three
A friend of a mother whose children attend the school!

If you are a parent or carer of a child or pupil currently at another lower school, please tell us which school:	No. of responses
Southill lower school	1
Parent of a pre-school child	1
Shelton lower	1
Bizzy bees preschool wootton , starting shelton in september 18	1
NA	1
Marston forest and Kempston Rural	1
Forest End Lower School	1
Thomas Johnson Lower School	1
no	1
Irthlingborough Junior	1
My child was at Shelton until May 2018	1
N/A	1
Boxmoor Primary	1
Houghton conquest	1
We have considered chimneytots/forest end	1
Wootton Lower	6
Church End Lower	5
Broadmead	2

Do you support the proposal to close Shelton Lower School, Marston Moretaine?



The level of support for closure has lowered from the previous stage – 91% disagree in this stage, 72% disagreed the school was unviable in the first stage.

The questionnaire asked for comments about the proposal to close Shelton Lower school. 91 comments were received. 34 respondents chose not to leave a comment. The key themes discussed were:

Theme	Number of Comments
Don't shut yet - building in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) will increase numbers	49
Other local schools are at/near capacity	33
Flawed consultation/contains inaccurate information	15
Valuable asset to the community	14
Concern about disrupting children's education	8
General agreement with the proposal	5
Promote the school more	5
Closure will increase traffic for commuting	4
Other	22
Total no. of comments	91

The most common themes were around not shutting the school due to future housing development in the area (this was the most common theme in the initial consultation stage), followed by comments about other local schools being close to (or at) capacity.

Comments about the consultation documents providing incorrect information were addressed during the initial stage of consultation and the school was informed.

“With increasing housing development in the cranfield/marston area I seriously question if you have got your sums right. Central Bedfordshire is a growth area - surely we need more schools not less. It would be foolish to close a school and then find yourself in a situation in a couple of years where there are a lack of pupil places.”

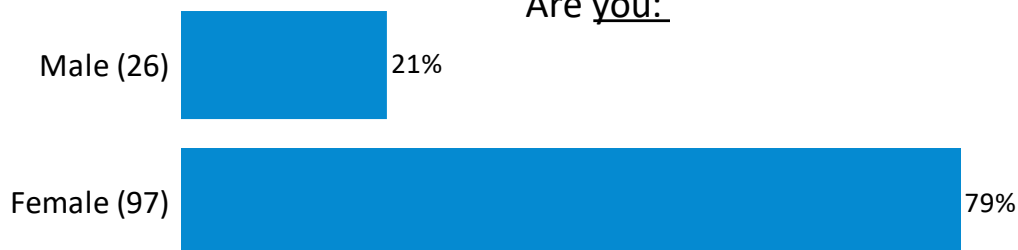
“The area is going through enormous change with a resulting increase in population and therefore children local schools are already bursting more school places are needed not less. Losing the school will also tip the heart out of the village”

“At no point have you spoken about the damage that you are doing to the childrens education. or the way you will deal with the children that remain in the school they have become numbers being paid for on a spread sheet. they are watching their friends go on a daily basis the staff are doing everything they can but they are also about to loose their jobs you decided to shut the school solely on finance with no regard for the childrens welfare”

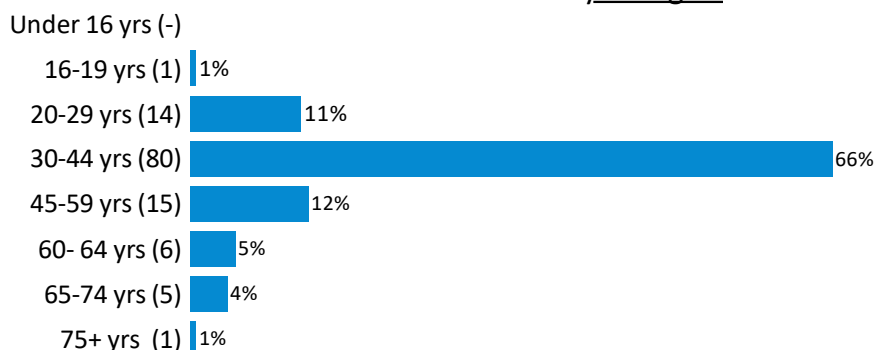
“The consultation papers State 5 in Reception when in actual fact there is 8 signed up. The consultation papers state 4 pupils for future years when the historical basis is 8 so the projected numbers are demonstrably skewed towards closure. The community use statement is incorrect as the school facilities are being used for community use. Closure would severely impact the community as the other location (the methodist church) has now been given over for private housing. In contacting the local schools they tell us as parents there are no spaces to offer.our children. With regard to travel the consultation statement is incorrect as a good proportion (about half) live locally and can/do walk to school”

About you

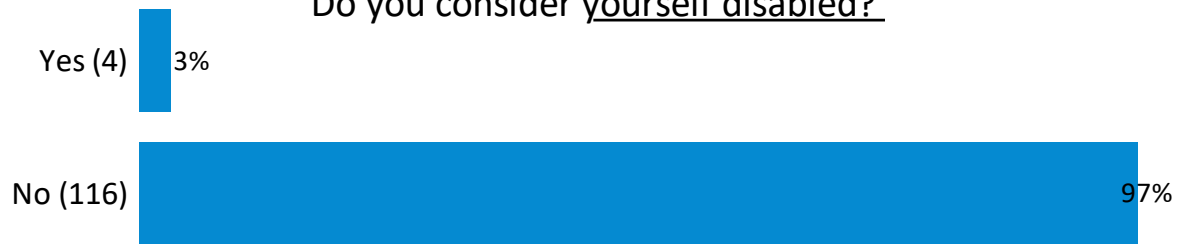
Are you:



What is your age?



Do you consider yourself disabled?



To which of these groups do you consider you belong?



If other, please specify:

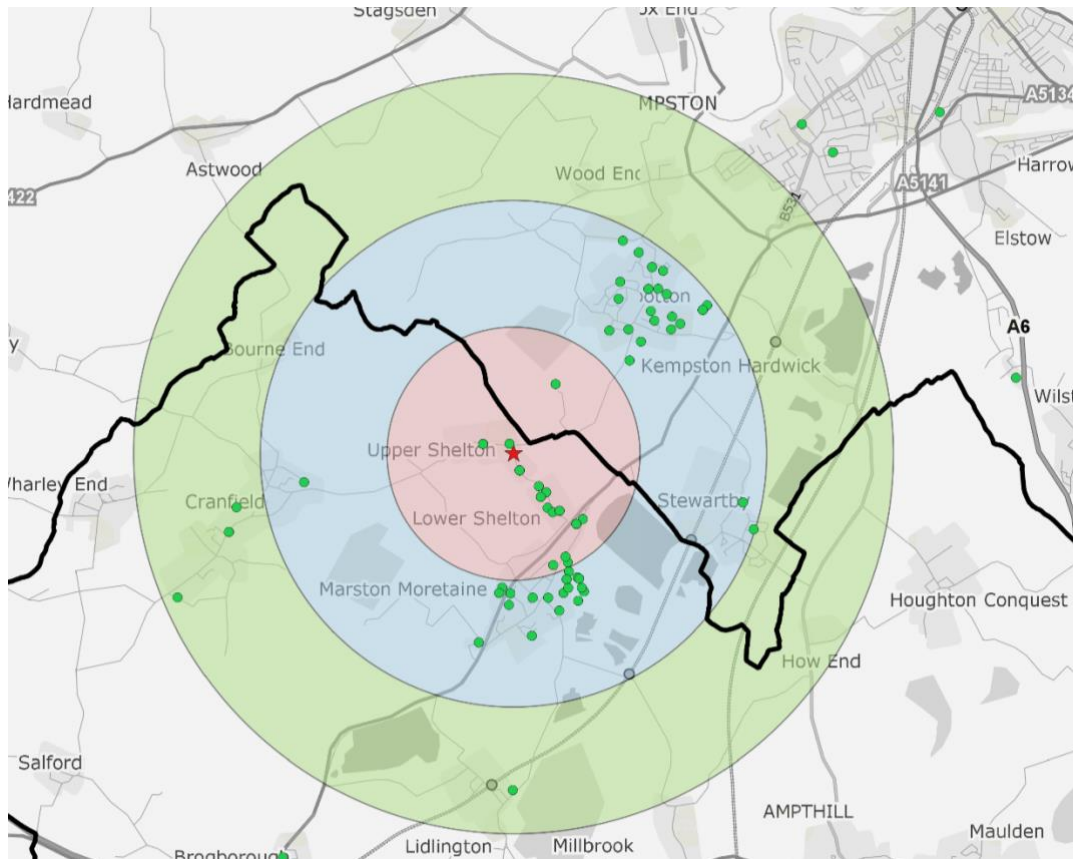
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Postcode analysis

A review of postcodes indicates that around half of respondents were from the local area around Shelton, ensuring those most affected by the proposal were able to have their say. Just over a quarter of responses were from residents of Bedford Borough. Most of these (26) were from Wootton ward, which borders Upper Shelton.

Location of respondent	Respondents
Central Bedfordshire	66
Cranfield and Marston Moretaine ward	61
Other Central Bedfordshire wards	5
Bedford	34
Other LAs	8
Unidentifiable	17
Grand Total	125

This is confirmed by the map below, which shows that most of the respondents to the consultation lived within two miles of Shelton Lower School.



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Each coloured circle on the map represents a distance of 1 mile from the school. The thick black line is the Central Bedfordshire Council area boundary. Note that there were also respondents from outside the area shown on the map.

- 36 respondents (29%) lived within 1 mile of the school
- 48 respondents (38%) lived within 1-2 miles of the school
- 5 respondents (4%) lived within 2-3 miles of the school
- 19 respondents (15%) lived more than 3 miles from the school
- 17 respondents (14%) did not give a full postcode.

Conclusions

Overall, the response to the statutory notice questionnaire broadly followed the initial stage of consultation – there is limited support for the proposal to close. Many of the key themes discussed are similar to the previous consultation stage, with the main topic of discussion around the amount of development in the area and the need for future school places. The main difference is the strength in feeling – more respondents are *less* supportive of closure at this point. There are also more comments this time around capacity of other schools – perhaps in part, due to parents having investigated options for their children should Shelton Lower school close.

It's important to state that the demographics of those that have responded are representative of the main group accessing lower schools and that the majority of respondents live in an area where they could (or do) access Shelton Lower school.

Central Bedfordshire in contact

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