

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Head of Members' Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Head of Members' Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

To approve the expansion of Cotton End Primary, Bromham Primary Wotton Lower School and Great Denham Primary from September 2018.

2. Date of decision

22nd March 2017

3. Reasons for decision

To enable Bromham, Cotton End, Wootton Lower and Great Denham schools to expand to meet local need.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

Not to support the expansion would mean the LA would be at risk of not offering sufficient numbers of school places.

5. How decision is to be funded

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

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The Mayor has been consulted on this decision



Signed 

Date 22/03/2017

Name of Decision Taker HENRY VANN

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Head of Members' Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 24th March 2017

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 3rd April 2017

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....~~YES~~ or NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Portfolio Holder

Date of Decision: 22 March 2017

Report by the Assistant Director for Education and Early Help (Chief Education Officer)

Subject: Expansion of Cotton End Primary School, Bromham Primary School, Wootton Lower School and Great Denham Primary School at the start of 2018/19 academic year

1. Executive Summary

This report is requesting Portfolio holder decision on whether to agree the expansion of Cotton End Primary School, Bromham Primary School, Wootton Lower School and Great Denham Primary School.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider the report and accompanying consultation responses and, if satisfied, approve the expansion of Cotton End Primary School, Bromham Primary School, Wootton Lower School and Great Denham Primary School to be enacted from the 2018/2019 academic year.**

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The expansion of Cotton End Primary School, Bromham Primary School, Wootton Lower School and Great Denham Primary School are necessary to meet the increasing demand for places in the surrounding areas.**

4. **Key Implications**

Legal Issues

- 4.1 The process for school expansion is detailed in the Department for Education **Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers (April 2016)**.

Policy Issues

- 4.2 The Council's agreed Corporate Plan 2017-2021 contains a specific strategic goal (CW2) to support people to develop the skills they need for employment and enterprise. The statutory provision of sufficient school places will support this goal.

Resource Implications

- 4.3 Full Council approved the capital budget for additional pupil places on 12th October 2016.

Risk Implications

- 4.4 The risk of this not being approved is that the Local Authority would not fulfil its statutory duty to provide adequate school places.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 There are no environmental impacts.

Equalities Impact

- 4.6 In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

- 4.7 The equality analysis is being conducted throughout the statutory process and will be finalised and acted upon towards the end of the process.

5. **Details**

- 5.1 There is population growth in the areas surrounding Cotton End Primary, Bromham Primary, Wootton Lower School and Great Denham Primary. All four schools are currently full from catchment pupils and forecasted to require more places from September 18.
- 5.2 The Local Authority has undertaken two stages of statutory consultation on the increase in each school's capacity from Reception upwards to gradually grow to accommodate an additional form of entry.
- 5.3 The proposal that was consulted on is as follows;
 Great Denham Primary – increase from 2 Form Entry to 3 Form Entry from Sept 18
 Bromham Primary– increase from 2 Form Entry to 3 Form Entry from Sept 18
 Cotton End Primary – increase from 0.5 Form Entry to 1 Form Entry from Sept 18 (with subsequent expansion up to 3 Form Entry as need arises)
 Wootton Lower School – increase from 3 Form Entry to 4 Form Entry
- 5.4 The consultation process undertaken is outlined below;

21 st October 2016	Portfolio Holder decision to consult on the expansions and, after reviewing the consultation, to publish statutory proposals if necessary.
21 st November 2016	Consultation starts
20 th January 2017	Consultation ends
20 th February	Publish statutory proposal with a 4 week representation period
20th March	4 week representation period ends

- 5.5 This decision enables the portfolio holder to review the consultation responses and make a decision on whether to agree to the expansions.

6. Summary of Consultations and Outcome

- 6.1 The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Children's and Adults' Services Senior Leadership team
 Cotton End Primary
 Great Denham Primary
 Bromham Primary
 Wootton Lower School

6.2 Two Public consultation events were held for Cotton End Primary and one for Bromham Primary. Responses to the public consultation for each school and the council's response are listed below:

School	No' of responses received	Issues raised	Response to concern
Bromham Primary	3	Parking/Highways	Significant work is being undertaken with local Parish council, ward councillor, highways and the planning authority to determine a solution which ensures impact on the highway and local residents is minimised.
		Lack of space on site	The space on site is tight, however the local authority are working with the parish council to ensure children have access to play space over and above that offered within the school boundary.
		Needing to upgrade current facilities	Current facilities will be upgraded as part of any proposal going forward.
Wootton Lower	5	Revenue funding	As with any school's growth, revenue funding will be dependent on pupil numbers and will reflect the increased amount of children on roll.
		Social demographic of the area	The schools' pupil premium funding will increase should there be any increase in the numbers of pupils eligible.

		Lack of space on site	There is sufficient space on the Harris way site to accommodate the additional classrooms required.
Cotton End Primary	15	Parking/Highways	Should the proposal go ahead there will be significant investment in upgrading the infrastructure supporting the village.
		Distance from New Cardington	This distance from New Cardington to the proposed school site is well within the designated school walking distance. The footpath linking the development and the school will be upgraded to ensure a safe route to school.
		Vistas from High Rd and Hermitage Gardens	There will be appropriate boundary treatment around the edge of the site to ensure that residents views are preserved. The proposed school design in one of single storey and timber construction.
		Positives for the school on expansion	There will be many benefits for Cotton End Primary School in the larger site including green play space, essential hall and sports facilities.
Great Denham Primary	6	Supportive comments regarding the school's local outstanding reputation.	
		Concern re impact on Highways	A full travel assessment will be undertaken as part of any planning application to determine the solution to minimise the impact on the highways and ensure parking is adequate.

6.3 Statutory notices were published on the Council's website, the individual school's website, within the local press and on the school buildings in accordance with the statutory guidance on the 20th February. An overview of the issues raised for each site through this period is listed below:

School	No' of responses received	Issues raised	Response to concern
Bromham Primary	0		
Wootton Lower	0		
Cotton End Primary	8	Parking/Highways	Should the proposal go ahead there will be significant investment in upgrading the infrastructure supporting the village.
		Distance from New Cardington	This distance from New Cardington to the proposed school site is well within the designated school walking distance. The footpath linking the development and the school will be upgraded to ensure a safe route to school.
		Validity of the consultation	All statutory consultees were contacted with the statutory notice details. 2 consultation events were held within the first consultation phase and the Parish council meeting was attended.
		Procurement method of new school	All school buildings are procured via construction framework which has been evidenced as providing excellent value for money.
		Use of alternative land sites	All other land options locally and

			nearer to New Cardington have been explored and discounted. The south field of Rookery Farm is the nearest possible location for the new school to be located.
		Design/ Construction method of new school	There will be many benefits for Cotton End Primary School in the larger site including green play space, essential hall and sports facilities.
Great Denham Primary	0		

Report Contact Officer: Colin Foster, Assistant Director – Education
e-mail : colin.foster@bedford.gov.uk

File Reference: None

Relevant Papers None

Background Papers: Responses to Public Consultation on Expansion of Cotton End Primary School
Responses to Public Consultation on Expansion of Great Denham Primary School
Responses to Public Consultation on Expansion of Bromham Primary School
Responses to Public Consultation on Expansion of Wootton Lower School
Responses to Statutory Notice to Expand Cotton End Primary School

Appendices: none

(Fw0666da)

**Consultation on the Relocation and Expansion of School Premises at Cotton End Primary School
Background Papers**

re: Proposed School Cotton End Planning Consultation

Having attended the recent planning consultation meetings on the above I feel I must write to express my concerns regarding several important issues.

Firstly, the siting of the school appears to be badly thought out and mainly led by the Councils desire to rush ahead with an expansion and at the same time utilise land already owned by the borough. The land suggested is situated next to the A600 which is the main route through to Bedford and Hitchin, via the A42 and A1. This road is particularly busy in the morning coinciding with the times when children will be arriving for school. Currently the proposed site will be directly opposite the exits of five roads which will cause considerable traffic problems to residents, who are already facing increasing amounts of heavy traffic. Pollution and safety issues have not been adequately addressed at the consultations and have failed to allay the fears of the residents of Cotton End. The suggestion that the road from Shortstown will be widened is extremely worrying, children having to walk along this dangerous road in all weathers is a recipe for disaster or else they will travel by car adding to the traffic through the village.

We have been told the plans for a bypass are now no longer an issue, and it is imperative that the current traffic numbers will only increase as more and more building and development happens, changing the beautiful countryside of Bedfordshire Villages and surrounding areas to a vast sprawling metropolis to be lost forever.

Due to the poor planning of the development currently being carried out at Shortstown/New Cardington, it would appear that no consultation has been held in Shortstown despite the obvious fact that most of the 650 children will be expected to come from there.

There are a number of options which appear to have been dismissed without thorough consideration, the land at Rookery Farm extends further along the High Road towards Shortstown, which would impact less on the residents of the village fail to see why relics of medieval life should be an excuse not to place the school here, as Bedfordshire and no doubt many parts of the UK have similar sites. The plans could be easily adapted to simply site the parking area/drop off points or landscaping over these "sites" allowing temporary covering as was done in Shocott Spring.

The existing site of Cotton End School is well placed for the current residents of the village, all housing being on the same side of the road. This means less problem with crossing/access to the school. School crossings traffic lights and roundabouts would therefore be totally unnecessary making a considerable saving from the budget.

Have any negotiations been carried out with neighbouring land owners situated behind the current school? This would be an obvious choice for any expansion needed. Apparently this was an option considered before the expense of the temporary classrooms were added at quite large expense. The savings made from the changes to the road could be offset against any costs in purchasing the land and free up the Council owned land for future housing and maintain the existing buildings which have been the site of a school since the 1890's.

Has the Council considered the problem that the planned future EastWest Rail link will be crossing just south of Shortstown effectively cutting off access from Shortstown to Cotton End? Will yet more money be spent ensuring safe access for the parents and children trying to get to Cotton End?

Finally, the need for expanding Cotton End School seems to be driven by the need for school places for the continuing development at Shortstown due to previous failures to adequately plan. Development is still ongoing and there are a number of sites which would make better sense to be used for the new school. The Council must give these sites due consideration before rushing ahead and making yet another expensive mistake at the expense of residents of both Cotton End and Shortstown.

I urge the Council to consider not just the short term solution, but the future of all the residents affected by any "quick fix" ill thought out plans.

Yours faithfully

Further to the recent planning consultation meetings I am writing to express my concerns over the project for a new school in Cotton End.

The Siting of the School

The selected site for the school has been chosen on the basis that it is the only land available to the council at the moment and dismisses completely the fact that there are other parcels of land at the Rookery Farm site and around Shortstown that for reasons that may or may not be valid are not suitable.

The parcel of land chosen sits next to the A600 opposite the exits to the only five roads in Cotton End which no matter where the entrance of the school is situated would lead to considerable inconvenience to residents. I do not believe that the introduction of roundabouts or traffic lights along this section of road would solve the likely problems of cars exiting these roads and would also exacerbate the delays experienced by through traffic passing through the village at peak times. It must be known also that when either the A421 or A1 experiences problems at peak times through heavy traffic or accident that the A600 is used as the best alternative route.

The majority of pupils are to be drawn from the community in Shortstown, this is likely to add further traffic chaos to Cotton End and inconvenience for the parents resident in Shortstown. who will have to bring their children to the new school either on foot or by car. Incidentally residents of Shortstown

have not been consulted over the position of the new school and are probably not even aware of the proposals.

Whilst, apparently, there is no council land available in Shortstown, there is a site being offered for the construction of a public house in the centre of Shortstown adjacent to Carmichael Drive which would certainly be more convenient for the residents of Shortstown and the phases for development. Which would be more appropriate when land for construction is so limited a pub or a school? A likely argument against this is the cost of the land but I am aware that in negotiations with the developers deals have been made with the council to get the best for the community and this would make an excellent alternative site.

The Alternatives

If indeed the school has to be situated in Cotton End and according to the first news issued via the school's website it would be situated "opposite the existing school", it would make more sense. The existing school could be kept and used as a primary school keeping the village feel and the traditions of a much loved village school not found elsewhere. A smaller school, to meet the demands of the older form entry classes, could be constructed with a view to expansion using modular classrooms on the site opposite. Not all of the site has evidence of archeological interest, any that are there could be preserved below playing fields much as those evident from aerial surveys which were covered by Shocott Spring. The entry and exit points to the school from the High road could be better managed than if the school were further in the village causing less impact on the residents whilst fulfilling the demands placed on the planners.

Parking

As the site appears to be bigger than the one proposed there would be more space for classrooms and for parking and a bigger area for a "Kiss and Drop" system could be opened opposite the existing school meeting the needs for both schools avoiding the need for parents to park on the main road or in neighbouring roads. A controlled crossing point would make it safe for people to cross from one school to the other should the need arise.

Pollution

At a time when cities and towns are considering the impact of pollution to the point of restricting access to certain types of vehicle it seems odd to me personally that a planning organisation is happy to site a new school next to a busy road when environmental health studies indicate that the particulates and exhaust gases from motor vehicles lead to all manner of illnesses amongst the young especially.

Statistics

The rationale for the school is based on a statistical analysis which may be flawed in as much as, even though the process was followed for Shortstown school it is clear that the school which was built to meet the demands of the expansion of Shortstown has proven to be totally inadequate. The difficulty in making planning decisions is exemplified in the recent expansion of the existing Cotton End Primary School when £750,000 was spent upgrading the facilities and classrooms which now only a few years later would seem to have been a waste of public money.

It seems in the planning of this project that no account has been taken into consideration for the change in the political future of the United Kingdom following the decision to leave the European Community. There is no way to predict the effect that this immense political change will have on the population figures for this area or any other in the UK, therefore to invest such large amounts of money, £8 million, in the face of stringent budget cuts in other areas would appear extravagant or simply foolish. The housing market has traditionally been subject to cyclical events which goes through boom and bust phases, this is true in the UK and elsewhere. In Spain, for example, millions of houses and apartments have been built for a growing population boosted by migration from the rest of Europe. New infrastructure such airports and roads and rail links built to accommodate the influx, yet now lie abandoned or little used. On a much smaller scale is this what we want to see happen here, planning for events that won't happen?

Conclusion

Although controlled development in Cotton End may not be welcomed it is probably inevitable and may mean an increase in population demanding a larger school in the future but this could be addressed as it happens.

It is always easy to criticise planners, who after all, are charged with a difficult task of pleasing everyone and meeting the requirements of the community, however a scheme for a school such as the one proposed is likely to cause major problems for the local residents and those passing through all in the name of dubious benefits based erroneous statistical data. I would urge you to reconsider your proposal.

Further to the two planning consultation meetings held on 5th and 16th December 2016 I am writing to express my objections over the proposal to expand/build a new school in Cotton End to provide education to residents of Eastcotts, and in particular Shortstown/New Cardington.

The Current School

The main Victorian school building has provided education in Cotton End, Eastcotts and the surrounding area for more than 140 years and was one of the first state run schools in both the country and in the county of Bedfordshire following the 1870 Forster Elementary Education Act and predates compulsory education. As such the building is of immense local and historical importance to our community and pre-dates much of the village.

During the two planning consultation meetings no reassurance was provided that the Victorian school building would be preserved. Whilst I understand that the building and land would be passed to the Bedford Borough Council Estates team for disposal, it would obviously be preferable if the existing school building is to be disposed of that the council would formulate a plan for reuse of the building in conjunction with the village residents, to achieve an agreed outcome acceptable to both parties.

A secondary concern is the new modular system 'Lungfish Connect' buildings installed at the current school less than 3 years ago at a cost to Bedford

Borough taxpayers of almost £0.8m. Working in the private sector it is difficult for me to understand how the financial justification for such a high level of investment can be discarded in such a short time without some sort of accountability, especially when private sector building infrastructure investments would usually have a return on investment (ROI) or payback period of up to 25 years.

Although it was suggested during the consultation meetings that these buildings may be reused on the new site, decommissioning them and removing them from the current site is not an exercise without cost, a cost that would probably run into tens of thousands of pounds alone.

The Proposed New School Site

The proposed new school site appears not to have been chosen as the best solution to provide education at the point it is required within Eastcotts – namely in Shortstown/New Cardington - but merely as a default position because it is Bedford Borough Council owned land. By your own admission at the last consultation meeting there has been no attempt made whatsoever to identify alternative sites or exploratory approaches e.g. via land agents, to landowners in Shortstown to see if more suitable locations are available. Within the current Call For Sites for the Local Plan 2035 landowners surrounding Shortstown have offered suitable sites for development which are literally within metres of the residents a new school would serve, and such a parcel of agricultural land would be valued at only c£500,000.

Assuming the site at the south end of Rookery Farm is used, it is far from problem free, and is fraught with a multitude of issues based on the proposed plans, including:

- The land is situated on the west side of the A600 and with the exception of the Rookery Farm buildings it will be the only property on that opposite side of the major road and would therefore be physically separated from the rest of the village
- The planned 'kiss and drop' entrance/exit would be positioned opposite and adjacent to Hermitage Gardens, Bell Lane, Wood Lane and Trow Close, as well as 4 driveways to houses and access to The Bell public house, and encompasses the current northbound bus stop for bus services to Bedford. In terms of road safety, road layout, highway construction and traffic flow, it is inconceivable to think of a worse place to put the new school access in the entirety of the village
- As a driver it is difficult to comprehend how traffic could be managed during peak times at this location in the village with vehicles criss-crossing against each other within a space of 100metres, and it is highly likely to be an accident blackspot. The introduction of roundabouts, traffic lights, and traffic calming at this point in the village would simply cause traffic chaos which would last long after the start and end of school, inconveniencing both village residents and other users of the A600
- It is expected that the majority of pupils that will attend the proposed new school will be from Shortstown/New Cardington, but there are no firm suggestions from the Borough Council how the parents and children would travel to the new site. If they choose to travel by car it would be sensible to estimate that around half the school cohort will choose this method, meaning 200 to 300 additional cars entering and exiting Cotton End during school times, which will only add to the estimated 8,000 cars that use the A600 daily.
- It is noted that other than parents and pupils walking a mile or more from Shortstown/New Cardington, the Borough Council have not offered any other transport solutions for pupils to get to the new school. I would suggest that it would be beneficial both to pupils attending the new school and villagers in Cotton End, to extend the No. 9 bus route which terminates at Shortstown to terminate at Cotton End instead and utilise the 'kiss and drop' area as a

turning point. Extending the No. 9 bus service would provide parents with an alternative to driving and would deliver children safely and directly to the school

- With regard to the proposed School layout plan, I would suggest that the plan should be rotated 180 degrees with the entrance positioned off the A600 at the south western corner of the site, adjacent to the sharp corner between Harrow Close and Trow Close, with entry/exit via a roundabout.
- It is well known that the land in the centre and northern end of Rookery Farm is a site of archaeological interest with previous archaeological research at the site dating finds to both Medieval and Iron Age periods. It is highly likely therefore that the southern area of Rookery Farm, the preferred site for the new school, would also be home to archaeological remains. If this were the case, what plans does the Borough Council have to provide additional school places if the building of the new school is delayed or aborted while archaeological excavation takes place? Does the Borough Council have a fallback position or Plan B if they cannot provide the school at the proposed site?

The Proposed New School

The proposed new school site appears not to have been chosen as the best solution to provide education at the point it is required within Eastcotts – namely in Shortstown/New Cardington - but merely as a default position because it is Bedford Borough Council owned land. By your own admission at the last consultation meeting there has been no attempt made whatsoever to identify alternative sites or exploratory approaches e.g. via land agents, to landowners in Shortstown to see if more suitable locations are available.

Within the current Call For Sites for the Local Plan 2035 landowners surrounding Shortstown have offered suitable sites for development which are literally within metres of the residents a new school would serve, and such a parcel of agricultural land would be valued at only c£500,000, a 1/16th of the estimated cost of the new school in Cotton End.

I noted the proposed plans detail the use of Lungfish products to construct the school. As the Lungfish Connect system buildings are the same as those recently installed at the existing Cotton End school, the Borough Council should have been clear that these are effectively ‘temporary classrooms’ and not a traditionally built permanent school buildings that would be expected.

The Environmental Impact

During the two public consultations, “forest school” learning was mentioned as being the learning method of choice with this new school. With this in mind I assume you intend on incorporating sustainable renewable energy resources such as solar panels, quiet wind turbines, biomass generator etc., to achieve in effect an ‘overall green eco school’ project, with reference to the BREEAM guidelines? Using renewable energy resources means less costs for running the school in the long term as well as ‘future proofing’ the school for future generations.

It is also worthwhile noting that due to the school being nearby to a main road that considerations should be made on any planting in and around the school, for example considering oxygen rich plantings or a living wall where common examples of this often utilise oxygen rich sedum plants.

Additionally consideration could be made to camouflage the buildings to reduce the visual impact, help them blend into the village environment and the “forest” setting, such as hanging gardens, green terraces, vertical farming on the exterior, and roof gardens.

As an entirely new school, as a local tax payer I would expect the new school to include sustainable design. For example state of the art heating systems that use the playground to warm and cool its buildings, ground source heat pumps or use of onsite generated biomass fuels for heating and energy, floor tiles that can be individually moved or replaced once they are worn. With these technologies built into the school buildings, they can be used to enhance the learning of the children, along with similar features in the grounds such as a wetland area in the grounds used for science projects and roof gardens to enable students to learn about birds and insects that would use it as their habitat. The playground could also have learning stations where pupils can examine bugs with magnifying glasses.

Attention should also be given to the internal school environment. Recent academic research by the Carnegie Mellon School of Architecture reports students achieving 20%-26% higher test scores in classrooms with ample natural light and trials have found that plants in classrooms can lead to improvements in spelling, maths and science of between 10% and 14%. Other research into school design based on biophilia – a love of life or living systems – confirms these benefits.

Additionally the use of natural materials in school buildings should be considered as these have also been found to reduce pupil stress levels. A 2009 study of a school in Austria found that classrooms with flooring, ceiling and cupboards made from timber slowed heart rates of students learning in that environment.

Attention restoration theory, developed by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980s, claims that people can concentrate better after spending time in nature, absorbing natural scenes such as clouds moving across the sky, leaves rustling in a breeze or water bubbling over rocks in a stream, so there are many benefits.

Ecology

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places on all local and public authorities a duty to conserve biodiversity. With this in mind the impact on ecology at the proposed new school site and in the surrounding area should not be ignored or underestimated.

The village of Cotton End is home to numerous birds, and at the proposed Rookery Farm site this includes visits by Red Kites and Barn Owls which are protected by EU Nature Directives as well as being a Schedule 1 Protected Species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Barn Owls nest in the wooded area abutting to the western end of the site and Shocott Spring which is within 30 metres of the site.

The Borough Council have statutory obligations to ensure ecological surveys are carried out as early as possible and not left until after planning permission

has been granted:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, . . . The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

“The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult Natural England before granting planning permission.”

I would like to see such an ecological survey to be carried out as soon as practically possible to confirm the suitability or not, of the propose site.

Species present in the village identified during previous ecological surveys include:

Amphibians – at least 3 species:

- Common Toad
- Great Crested Newt
- Smooth Newt

Birds – at least 49 species:

- Barn Owl
- Blackbird
- Blackcap
- Black-Headed Gull
- Blue Tit

- Bullfinch
- Buzzard
- Carrion Crow
- Chaffinch
- Collared Dove
- Corn Bunting
- Dunnock
- Goldfinch
- Great Spotted Woodpecker
- Great Tit
- Green Woodpecker
- Greenfinch
- Grey Heron
- Greylag Goose
- House Martin
- House Sparrow
- Jackdaw
- Jay
- Kestrel
- Linnet
- Magpie
- Mallard
- Partridge
- Pheasant
- Pied Wagtail
- Quail
- Red Kite
- Reed Bunting
- Robin
- Robin
- Siskin
- Skylark
- Song Thrush
- Sparrowhawk
- Starling
- Stock Dove
- Swallow
- Swift

- Tree Sparrow
- Whitethroat
- Wood Pigeon
- Wren
- Yellowhammer

Insects:

- Emerald Damselfly
- Scarce Chaser
- Small Heath
- Dingy Skipper
- Grizzled Skipper
- White Ermine

Other Animals:

- Stoat
- Rabbit
- Muntjac deer

I trust the response I have given in this letter will be given full consideration within the consultation review, and in particular the severe impact on the A600 and the village that will occur at the planned school entrance will be recognised. Additionally, the impact on the ecology of the site and in the village should not be ignored.

Yours Sincerely,

Further to the two planning consultation meetings held on 5th and 16th December 2016 I am writing to express my objections over the proposal to expand/build a new school in Cotton End to provide education to residents of Eastcotts, and in particular Shortstown/New Cardington.

The Current School

The main Victorian school building has provided education in Cotton End, Eastcotts and the surrounding area for more than 140 years and was one of the first state run schools in both the country and in the county of Bedfordshire following the 1870 Forster Elementary Education Act and predates compulsory education. As such the building is of immense local and historical importance to our community and pre-dates much of the village.

During the two planning consultation meetings no reassurance was provided that the Victorian school building would be preserved. Whilst I understand that the building and land would be passed to the Bedford Borough Council Estates team for disposal, it would obviously be preferable if the existing school building is to be disposed of that the council would formulate a plan for reuse of the building in conjunction with the village residents, to achieve an agreed outcome acceptable to both parties.

A secondary concern is the new modular system 'Lungfish Connect' buildings installed at the current school less than 3 years ago at a cost to Bedford Borough taxpayers of almost £0.8m. Working in the private sector it is difficult for me to understand how the financial justification for such a high level of investment can be discarded in such a short time without some sort of accountability, especially when private sector building infrastructure investments would usually have a return on investment (ROI) or payback period of up to 25 years.

Although it was suggested during the consultation meetings that these buildings may be reused on the new site, decommissioning them and removing them from the current site is not an exercise without cost, a cost that would probably run into tens of thousands of pounds alone.

The Proposed New School Site

The proposed new school site appears not to have been chosen as the best solution to provide education at the point it is required within Eastcotts – namely in Shortstown/New Cardington - but merely as a default position because it is Bedford Borough Council owned land. By your own admission at the last consultation meeting there has been no attempt made whatsoever to identify alternative sites or exploratory approaches e.g. via land agents, to landowners in Shortstown to see if more suitable locations are available. Within the current Call For Sites for the Local Plan 2035 landowners surrounding Shortstown have offered suitable sites for development which are literally within metres of the residents a new school would serve, and such a parcel of agricultural land would be valued at only c£500,000.

Assuming the site at the south end of Rookery Farm is used, it is far from problem free, and is fraught with a multitude of issues based on the proposed plans, including:

- The land is situated on the west side of the A600 and with the exception of the Rookery Farm buildings it will be the only property on that opposite side of the major road and would therefore be physically separated from the rest of the village
- The planned 'kiss and drop' entrance/exit would be positioned opposite and adjacent to Hermitage Gardens, Bell Lane, Wood Lane and Trow Close, as well as 4 driveways to houses and access to The Bell public house, and encompasses the current northbound bus stop for bus services to Bedford. In terms of road safety, road layout, highway construction and traffic flow, it is inconceivable to think of a worse place to put the new school access in the entirety of the village
- As a driver it is difficult to comprehend how traffic could be managed during peak times at this location in the village with vehicles criss-crossing against each other within a space of 100metres, and it is highly likely to be an accident blackspot. The introduction of roundabouts, traffic lights, and

traffic calming at this point in the village would simply cause traffic chaos which would last long after the start and end of school, inconveniencing both village residents and other users of the A600

- It is expected that the majority of pupils that will attend the proposed new school will be from Shortstown/New Cardington, but there are no firm suggestions from the Borough Council how the parents and children would travel to the new site. If they choose to travel by car it would be sensible to estimate that around half the school cohort will choose this method, meaning 200 to 300 additional cars entering and exiting Cotton End during school times, which will only add to the estimated 8,000 cars that use the A600 daily.
- It is noted that other than parents and pupils walking a mile or more from Shortstown/New Cardington, the Borough Council have not offered any other transport solutions for pupils to get to the new school. I would suggest that it would be beneficial both to pupils attending the new school and villagers in Cotton End, to extend the No. 9 bus route which terminates at Shortstown to terminate at Cotton End instead and utilise the 'kiss and drop' area as a turning point. Extending the No. 9 bus service would provide parents with an alternative to driving and would deliver children safely and directly to the school
- With regard to the proposed School layout plan, I would suggest that the plan should be rotated 180 degrees with the entrance positioned off the A600 at the south western corner of the site, adjacent to the sharp corner between Harrow Close and Trow Close, with entry/exit via a roundabout.
- It is well known that the land in the centre and northern end of Rookery Farm is a site of archaeological interest with previous archaeological research at the site dating finds to both Medieval and Iron Age periods. It is highly likely therefore that the southern area of Rookery Farm, the preferred site for the new school, would also be home to archaeological remains. If this were the case, what plans does the Borough Council have to provide additional school places if the building of the new school is delayed or aborted while archaeological excavation takes place? Does the Borough Council have a fallback position or Plan B if they cannot provide the school at the proposed site?

The Proposed New School

The proposed new school site appears not to have been chosen as the best solution to provide education at the point it is required within Eastcotts – namely in Shortstown/New Cardington - but merely as a default position because it is Bedford Borough Council owned land. By your own admission at the last consultation meeting there has been no attempt made whatsoever to identify alternative sites or exploratory approaches e.g. via land agents, to landowners in Shortstown to see if more suitable locations are available.

Within the current Call For Sites for the Local Plan 2035 landowners surrounding Shortstown have offered suitable sites for development which are literally within metres of the residents a new school would serve, and such a parcel of agricultural land would be valued at only c£500,000, a 1/16th of the estimated cost of the new school in Cotton End.

I noted the proposed plans detail the use of Lungfish products to construct the school. As the Lungfish Connect system buildings are the same as those recently installed at the existing Cotton End school, the Borough Council should have been clear that these are effectively 'temporary classrooms' and not a traditionally built permanent school buildings that would be expected.

The Environmental Impact

During the two public consultations, “forest school” learning was mentioned as being the learning method of choice with this new school. With this in mind I assume you intend on incorporating sustainable renewable energy resources such as solar panels, quiet wind turbines, biomass generator etc., to achieve in effect an ‘overall green eco school’ project, with reference to the BREEAM guidelines? Using renewable energy resources means less costs for running the school in the long term as well as ‘future proofing’ the school for future generations.

It is also worthwhile noting that due to the school being nearby to a main road that considerations should be made on any planting in and around the school, for example considering oxygen rich plantings or a living wall where common examples of this often utilise oxygen rich sedum plants.

Additionally consideration could be made to camouflage the buildings to reduce the visual impact, help them blend into the village environment and the “forest” setting, such as hanging gardens, green terraces, vertical farming on the exterior, and roof gardens.

As an entirely new school, as a local tax payer I would expect the new school to include sustainable design. For example state of the art heating systems that use the playground to warm and cool its buildings, ground source heat pumps or use of onsite generated biomass fuels for heating and energy, floor tiles that can be individually moved or replaced once they are worn. With these technologies built into the school buildings, they can be used to enhance the learning of the children, along with similar features in the grounds such as a wetland area in the grounds used for science projects and roof gardens to enable students to learn about birds and insects that would use it as their habitat. The playground could also have learning stations where pupils can examine bugs with magnifying glasses.

Attention should also be given to the internal school environment. Recent academic research by the Carnegie Mellon School of Architecture reports students achieving 20%-26% higher test scores in classrooms with ample natural light and trials have found that plants in classrooms can lead to improvements in spelling, maths and science of between 10% and 14%. Other research into school design based on biophilia – a love of life or living systems – confirms these benefits.

Additionally the use of natural materials in school buildings should be considered as these have also been found to reduce pupil stress levels. A 2009 study of a school in Austria found that classrooms with flooring, ceiling and cupboards made from timber slowed heart rates of students learning in that environment.

Attention restoration theory, developed by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980s, claims that people can concentrate better after spending time in nature, absorbing natural scenes such as clouds moving across the sky, leaves rustling in a breeze or water bubbling over rocks in a stream, so there are many benefits.

Ecology

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places on all local and public authorities a duty to conserve biodiversity. With this in mind the impact on ecology at the proposed new school site and in the surrounding area should not be ignored or underestimated.

The village of Cotton End is home to numerous birds, and at the proposed Rookery Farm site this includes visits by Red Kites and Barn Owls which are protected by EU Nature Directives as well as being a Schedule 1 Protected Species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Barn Owls nest in the wooded area abutting to the western end of the site and Shocott Spring which is within 30 metres of the site.

The Borough Council have statutory obligations to ensure ecological surveys are carried out as early as possible and not left until after planning permission has been granted:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, . . . The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

“The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult Natural England before granting planning permission.”

I would like to see such an ecological survey to be carried out as soon as practically possible to confirm the suitability or not, of the propose site.

Species present in the village identified during previous ecological surveys include:

Amphibians – at least 3 species:

- Common Toad
- Great Crested Newt
- Smooth Newt

Birds – at least 49 species:

- Barn Owl
- Blackbird
- Blackcap
- Black-Headed Gull
- Blue Tit
- Bullfinch
- Buzzard
- Carrion Crow
- Chaffinch
- Collared Dove
- Corn Bunting
- Dunnock
- Goldfinch
- Great Spotted Woodpecker
- Great Tit
- Green Woodpecker
- Greenfinch
- Grey Heron
- Greylag Goose
- House Martin
- House Sparrow
- Jackdaw
- Jay
- Kestrel
- Linnet
- Magpie
- Mallard
- Partridge
- Pheasant
- Pied Wagtail
- Quail
- Red Kite
- Reed Bunting
- Robin
- Robin

- Siskin
- Skylark
- Song Thrush
- Sparrowhawk
- Starling
- Stock Dove
- Swallow
- Swift
- Tree Sparrow
- Whitethroat
- Wood Pigeon
- Wren
- Yellowhammer

Insects:

- Emerald Damselfly
- Scarce Chaser
- Small Heath
- Dingy Skipper
- Grizzled Skipper
- White Ermine

Other Animals:

- Stoat
- Rabbit
- Muntjac deer

I trust the response I have given in this letter will be given full consideration within the consultation review, and in particular the severe impact on the A600

and the village that will occur at the planned school entrance will be recognised. Additionally, the impact on the ecology of the site and in the village should not be ignored.

Yours Sincerely,

RE: ENLARGEMENT OF COTTON END PRIMARY SCHOOL REPRESENTATIONS FROM COTTON END RESIDENTS GROUP

(Formally recognised by a representation from Cotton End residents at a meeting held on 12th January 2017).

We (Cotton End Residents Group) are writing in response to the recent Council presentations of a new School Site within Cotton End located north of High Road within the land known as Rookery Farm.

This letter sets out the thoughts and concerns, and offers alternatives from the Cotton End Residents Group which incorporates the concerns of all residents who have made their views known to the Parish Council and Committee Members of the Residents Group.

This letter is structured to offer Context, Policy Objections and Other Key Concerns concluding with Alternative Options for the Council's consideration.

Context.

The former Shortstown Primary (Lower) School site off Canberra Road, which also accommodated SureStart, has been relocated south of the Shorts Building as part of the redevelopment of RAF Cardington, known as 'New Cardington'.

The former School site is now housing development, the current School, we are advised, is at capacity at entry level and the site within which it is located prohibits expansion.

The 'New Cardington' development included a new School site that was to be funded in some part by the same development and was calculated at that point in time to be of an adequate size to accommodate the existing Shortstown population and the 'New Cardington' development. What is not clear is if the new School site was future-proofed to be able to expand to accommodate the additional c.930 dwellings planned on the Fosbern land to the east and west of the Cardington Sheds.

Consequently, Bedford Borough Council stated at the Public Consultation in Cotton End Village Hall, that in order to meet the educational needs of the approved residential planning schemes within Eastcotts Parish, that a new School is required. The current School at Shortstown does not have the capacity to meet the needs of the approved developments based on current Borough Council projections. The Council informed the public at the aforementioned Consultation that the only available site for a new School would not be in Shortstown, but in Cotton End, 1.5miles away from the approved Shortstown development centre, and extending the Cotton End catchment to all of Eastcotts.

Policy Objections.

Settlement Policy Area Boundary.

The proposed site is outside of the Cotton End Settlement Policy Area Boundary. The purpose of a Settlement Boundary is to control development to within the boundary which then controls growth to be within growth areas, not within rural areas. Policy H26 of the Council's adopted Local Plan, while referenced housing, provides for a presumption against development within the countryside and defines countryside as land outside of the Settlement Policy Area Boundary. Therefore, the proposed site is contrary to policy. Justification for breaching this policy has not been offered by the Council.

Forest of Marston Vale.

Cotton End falls within the Forest of Marston Vale as defined within the 'Allocations and Designations Local Plan' and therefore subject to Policy AD25. This Policy makes provision that development within Cotton End will only be acceptable in 'appropriate' circumstances that address the aims of the 2000 Forest Plan. It is not clear how the envisaged scheme will contribute to the Plan, more detrimental to it.

Sustainability.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This does not just extend to the 'green rating' of the building, such as Breeam, but also the location of the development to the surrounding settlements. Clearly, development within a settlement with good infrastructure, with sustainable transport routes and within attractive walking distances comprising safe walking routes is favourable.

The proposed development site is c.1.5 miles away from the principal community it will serve, Shortstown, and will be accessed via a major road (A600) with speed limits in place of 60mph and 40mph between the principal community the School will serve (Shortstown) and the proposed School site. This will inevitably discourage sustainable methods of transport, walking and cycling, due to the inherent dangers of walking and cycling alongside such a road, irrespective of an intent to widen the existing footpath alongside the A600.

The distance alone will discourage walking. Couple the distance with the danger the traffic speed presents and this will encourage parents to drive pupils to the School. This is something the Council have recognised by stating in the Public Consultation that a deliberate large car park will be provided off street for drop-off and pick-up. This provision is absolutely contrary to the Council's usual stance to discourage car travel to and from School sites and therefore inherently unsustainable.

Travel Distance & Safety.

The Council promotes Safer Routes to Schools and School Travel Plans emphasising the Council's objectives and stance on ensuring safe and sustainable routes to Schools. By inference therefore, the proposed School site does not meet these objectives and aspirations.

Walking is widely considered to be the most important mode of travel at a local level. Based on Table 3.2 of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CHIT) publication 'Providing Journeys on Foot'; the preferred maximum walking distance for the purposes of School journeys is considered to be 2km (1.2 miles). This travel distance needs to be considered in the context that it is very likely that pupils will be accompanied by adults to and from the School effectively doubling the travel distance as adults would need to walk back to Shortstown after dropping the pupils off. This extends the walking distance to 3 miles, over double the CHIT recommendation.

The School site is 1.5 miles away from the centre of the Shortstown community, Beauvais Square. The only route to the proposed School site is via the footpath along the western kerb line of the A600, which as cited above, has a speed limit of 60mph.

The Council stated at the Public Consultation that the existing footpath would be upgraded and widened. However, the widened footpath will be bounded to the west by a ditch and to the east by the kerb line of north bound traffic (towards Bedford) on the A600.

If sustainable travel to and from the School is envisaged (i.e. walking and cycling), the Council is encouraging young children and parents to walk/cycle to and from Shortstown to the School site alongside a major road delivering up to 630 children every day. These trips will be made during rush hour in the morning and during late afternoon traffic which brings with it obvious and serious safety concerns. The result of which will inevitably promote unsustainable transportation to and from the School.

We would be pleased to see the Council's independent Road Safety Audit and Green Travel Plan for the proposal.

Other Key Concerns.

Consultation.

“The local authority will consider the views of a wide range of stakeholders with stakeholders”. (Consultation Document).

Residents within Eastcotts are very disappointed with the lack of publicity for the Public Consultation. The only advertisement found and known about was displayed on the existing Cotton End Primary School website with no specific communication from the local authority to stakeholders other than parents of children that currently attend that School.

It is known that housing developers when undertaking Public Exhibitions and Consultations are encouraged by the Council to post advertisements within the local press for a couple of weeks in advance of the meeting. In addition, posters advertising the Consultation are placed in hotspots, such as Public Houses, Convenience stores and on Parish Notice Boards and lamp posts in the vicinity of the proposed development. Furthermore, leaflet drops are undertaken to the local community. All of this is then pulled together within a Community Involvement Statement submitted with a Planning Application as evidence that a Public Exhibition/Consultation has been undertaken in a fair, thorough, comprehensive and transparent manner.

To the knowledge of Cotton End residents, no such thorough advertising nor publication were undertaken. It was therefore left to the Village to distribute the Council's Consultation Document throughout the Village ready for the Consultation meetings which were held on 5th and 16th of December. Without the actions of the Village, it is unlikely anyone would have attended due to the lack of effort to publicise these consultation events.

As the local authority stated in their Consultation Document, the £8,000,000 cost of the new School was being met by the Local Authority which we believe has come into, or will be coming into the Council through Section 106 Contributions, principally from the existing and forthcoming Shortstown/New Cardington developments. Surely therefore, coupled with the intention to extend the catchment of the new Cotton End School to Shortstown, the residents of Shortstown/New Cardington – as the larger community affected - are stakeholders in the new School project as well and should have been invited to attend the Consultations.

We are looking forward to a greater effort from the Borough Council to publicise any further Consultations and would suggest the following:

- Advertisements within local newspapers, the Beds on Sunday and Times & Citizen;
- Advertisements within the Cotton End Diary and Shortstown Gasbag;
- Posters placed within the Shortstown Food Bar, Nisa Local Store, and Tesco Express in Shortstown/New Cardington;
- Posters placed in The Bell public house in Cotton End;
- Posters put up on Parish Notice Boards;

- Leaflet drops within Shortstown and Cotton End.

This would constitute an all-encompassing and thorough community Public Consultation.

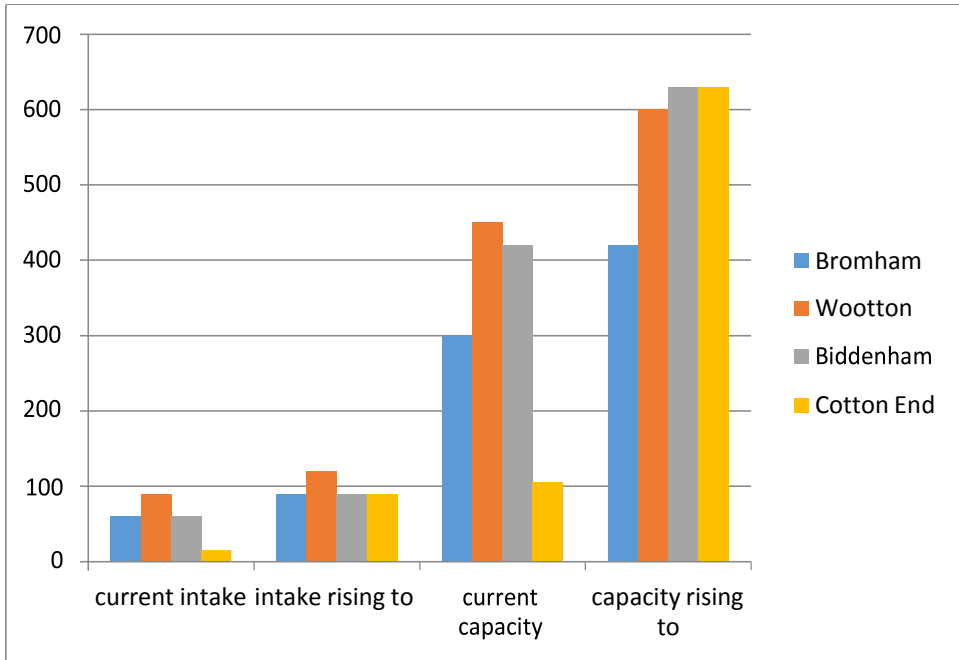
New School.

The Council have cited projections that by 2020, the new Cotton End School will be a three form entry School accommodating c.630 pupils.

Looking at other Schools which are due to change, the figures are way out of proportion. For example:

Bromham	intake currently	60	rising to	90	capacity	300	rising to	420
			increase	150%			increase	140%
Wootton	intake currently	90	rising to	120	capacity	450	rising to	600
			increase	133%			increase	133%
Biddenham	intake currently	60	rising to	90	capacity	420	rising to	630
			increase	150%			increase	150%
Cotton End	intake currently	15	rising to	90	capacity	105	rising to	630
			increase	600%			increase	600%

This out of proportion growth can be illustrated via use of a simple chart:



Environmental Impact Assessment.

Has the Council undertaken an independent Screening Opinion for an EIA, if so, what was the result? If not, we look forward to understanding why not.

Ecology.

We assume that appropriate Ecology Surveys in relation to the new site will be undertaken and appropriate enhancement and mitigation measures are put in place

Services.

We know the foul sewer system and surface water drainage system in the Village are already under strain with problems especially during the summer months with pollution smells coming from the drainage ditches. Any development will amplify those existing problems, therefore, any development will need to offer with investigative works and upgrading as necessary.

Benefits.

The new School seems to offer a couple of notable benefits;

- (i) An education facility for the additional forthcoming residents of Shortstown.
- (ii) The potential for a modern and state of the art education facility for the benefit of the children in Eastcotts, as long as the proposed School is constructed to a standard as good as, or better than, the recently constructed School in Shortstown. What would be a shame for all the residents of Eastcotts and all Borough tax payers would be to see a School developed that is sub-standard in design, material, and layout and not future- proof.

Summary.

The School is not for Cotton End, Cotton End already has a School. While improved education facilities are an admirable aspiration, the residents of Cotton End are not convinced that the Council is proposing the School in the right location.

On the balance of all of the above, the cons significantly out-weigh the pros, and we would urge the Council to re-consider their options. The Cotton End Residents Group will be interested to engage with the Council in the future to understand their proposals further.

Alternative Options.

In the interest of completeness, we wonder if the Council has considered and thoroughly examined the viability of alternative options. If the Council has, we would be interested to understand why any alternatives have been dismissed.

Various alternatives have been discussed within the Residents Group as follows;

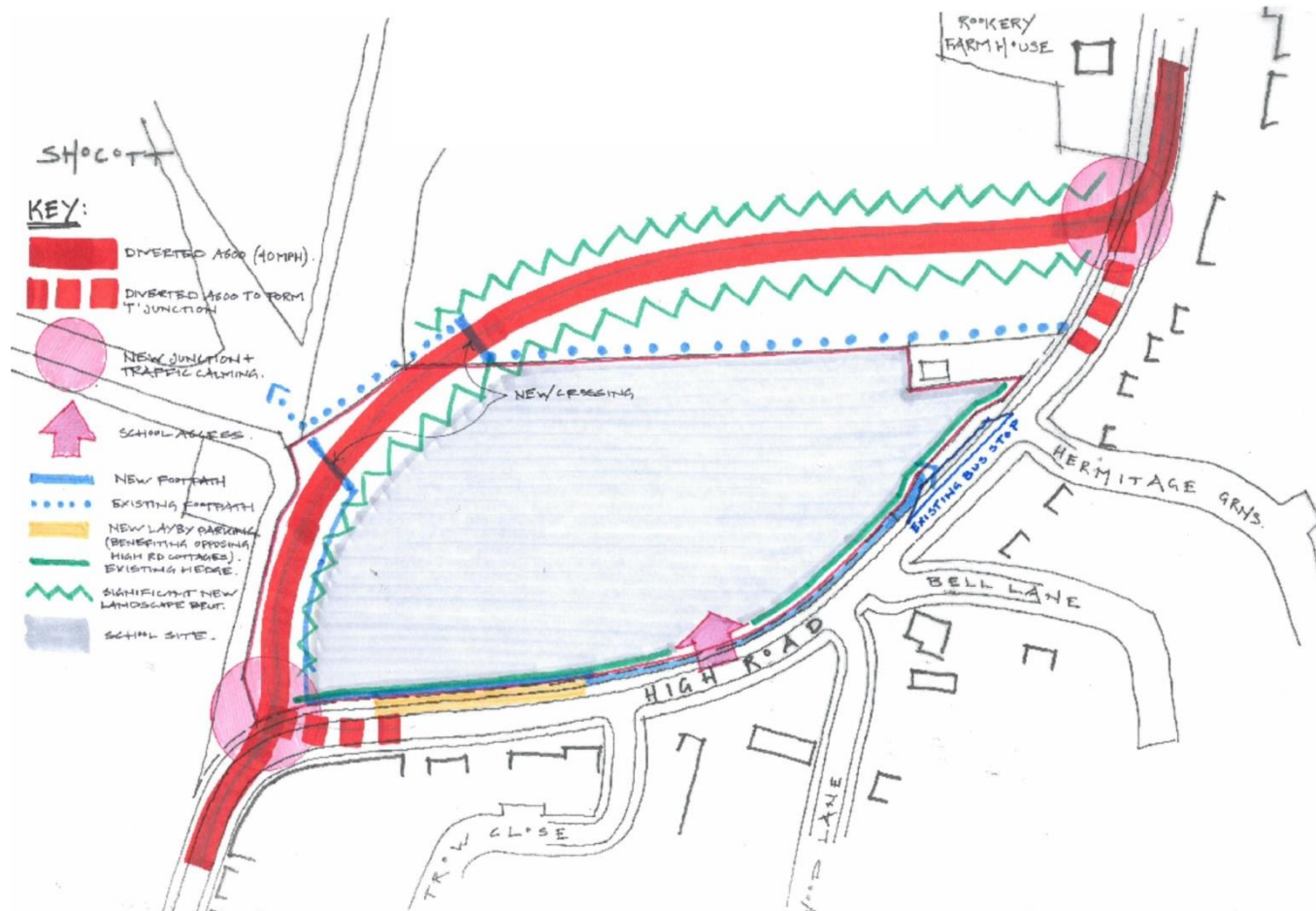
- (i) A precedent has been set in the consultation underway to redefine Willington and Cople Schools, with a solution to increase education places by using both existing Schools to meet local demands from both Villages. The School at Shortstown could be split with Pre-School/Infants in a different location to Juniors, e.g. with pre-school/infants on another site.
- (ii) The recent Call for Sites (CfS) promotes land around Shortstown for development, some of which are substantial such as the promotion to the east and south of Shortstown. This is promoted in the CfS submission as having 750 dwellings and Community Facilities. Should this promotion be successful, it would be within the Council's remit and control to ensure that part of the land is allocated for a School and funded by Section 106 Obligations on that site.

- (iii) Also within the CfS is a promotion of the land immediately to the rear of the existing School within Cotton End. If this land was allocated and acquired by the Council for education use, the existing School could be expanded to accommodate a greater intake of pupils while item (i) above is progressed. This could prove a positive short term solution, and cheaper for the Council, while another School site was sourced in Shortstown, leaving the community of Cotton End with an improved education facility once another School is operational.
- (iv) We understand that there are plans for a Pub Restaurant and Nursing Home in the Consented Development in New Cardington. We also understand that a tenant for either site is proving difficult to attract. At some point the land owner will be permitted to explore alternative use for those sites if the permitted use proves unviable. Perhaps these sites could become Pre-School/Infants sites within Shortstown easing the capacity in that locale and serving the Community as the land was always intend to do.
- (v) Finally, should the currently envisaged site come forward, we would make the recommendation that the current alignment of the A600 be diverted along the Western and Northern boundaries of the site, or further Northwards into Rookery Farm. The current alignment of the A600 from the sharp corner between Harrow Close and Trow Close could then be re-categorise as a residential street to wherever the re-alignment ties back into the existing alignment, say, just South of Rookery Farm House (See Attached Plan 1). This would ensure that the School is morphologically absorbed into the Village. Access to the School could then be off the existing High Road, which would be much quieter in terms of traffic trips, therefore safer, as through traffic would effectively bypass the School access.
- (vi) Alternatively the proposed School layout could be rotated 180 degrees with the entrance off the A600 at the sharp corner between Harrow Close and Trow Close via a roundabout.

We trust the above is useful and the Borough Council will adequately gauge the objection within the Village. We look forward to discussing this and working with the Council further.

Yours sincerely

For and on behalf of the Cotton End Residents Group



PLAN 1. ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS: COTT LANE END RESIDENTS GROUP. JAN. 17.

Re: PROPOSED EXPANSION OF COTION END PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following the recent "consultations" in relation to the above I would like to set my own thoughts in relation to the expansion of Cotton End Primary School and to reflect upon this in educational terms.

- As we all know, the existing school has had a challenging past with the threat of closure on I understand at least one occasion.
- We know that currently many children at the school do not live in the village – however one cannot ignore parental choice in respect of the desire I believe in many cases for parents to elect to send their child to a small school. So my question here is where will parental choice sit in relation to the new school. Extending the catchment area to Eastcotts will mean (I think) giving equal weighting to children who live further away in the Parish. Will it mean that parents who live locally in the village might not still be able to send their child to the local school.
- Planning versus education – we understand that it was indicated that the existing school at Shortstown might never have had the educational capacity to meet approved planning in relation to house building in the area. What we see now is the result with a huge mismatch between available local school places and a projected need. How can we be sure that the calculations used to determine the growth of Cotton End Primary School are accurate. Likewise in relation to churn rates – people move into an area with young children (sometimes) but they don't tend to move out in equal number – hence we could find that in the future the school would be less than financially viable due to educational vacancies. Therefore what is the long term future for such a school.
- Cited in the consultation document was the fact that the educational experience for children at the new school would be enhanced (my words this is not verbatim) due to improved facilities, less crowding, single year groups etc plus plus. Sadly buildings do not make a school and during my work in education performance of a school does not necessarily sit with building and facilities. It is about the overall experience that the school provides such that children currently get in Cotton End. I would rather the education department were brave enough to paint an honest picture of the challenges that such a large school would face.
- You mention in the consultation document that Borough are used to "growing" a school while it is operational and that children's education would not be disrupted. I would suggest that this has historically not been the case not just in our local school but with other schools in the locality. So how are you going to manage "building growth".

We all live in the real world and have some understanding of developers negotiations whereby a deal is struck for infrastructure services if land is released for housing. Nor am I naive enough not to understand that government puts pressure on local councils. It would therefore seem to be naive of the council education department not to open dialogue with the housing department to ascertain not just growth in Shortstown but projections aligned to the local plan and the upcoming inspectorate for Cotton End aligned to the local plan.

- Have all the possible options for Shortstown been exhausted? Sometimes it is a parent's desire to choose a school which means significant travelling however. On observed evidence re Shortstown with (I believe) the local school being at capacity at entry point it would seem parents want their child to be schooled locally at Shortstown.

Did the education department consider splitting the school between pre school/ infants and junior having the former on another site or was this just not an option. Some pre school and infant schools (children up to the age of seven) are aligned to a village hall and built adjoining such a facility enabling best use of a community asset and saving a substantial amount of money – has such a possibility been explored for Shortstown?

- If the Borough had a change of heart re location of the school either to another part of rookery farm or indeed ultimately to Shortstown – if the latter should happen would Borough still acknowledge the valuable educational experience that the small school at Cotton End can offer and be willing to keep it open – or would it be closed?

I suspect that no matter how many representations are made whether its around safety (which is a major issue), parental choice, educational experience arguments will always be put forward that a bigger school with up to 650 children will be the best in education. Only time will tell – to quote from Bedfordshire Education Committee Schools Progress booklet " *the year 1970 sees the start of re-organisation of education in Bedfordshire on a three tier system whereby children will remain in the First or lower school fromthis system will operate in Kempston in 1971.....It is hoped that this new system will avoid the pitfalls of selection at 11, will enable the continuing change in maturity of children to be catered for an delay until a later age the hazards of too early specialisation"oh dear?'2?* Full circle and all the implications that go with it ?

Kindest regards.

Myself and my wife live at 21 High Road, Cotton End and have done for the last three years. We do not have children of school age but do understand the need for good education. We are fully integrated in village life and support all the activities / fund raising when possible. We are very fortunate to own and live in a lovely grade 2 listed building and feel that we are an integral part of the village.

Cotton End Primary School is a small village style primary school providing sufficient places for the children of Cotton End. We are informed that at this time there are sufficient spaces at the school to meet the future needs of the village. I do not feel that due to somebody making an error in calculating the future schooling needs of New Cardington, that we should have a new school built in the village to accommodate children from other developments.

At the consultation meeting we were told that there had been a survey conducted with regards to the safety of the A600 from New Cardington to Cotton End. It was stated that the road was safe for pedestrians to make the journey along the A600, inferring that children would be able to walk to Cotton End from New Cardington. Having been a police officer for 30years (now retired) over 20 years as a traffic officer. I walk along this road every day to get my dogs to Shocott and feel very uneasy and threatened by the speed of the vehicles coming towards the village. Add this together with the amount of drivers that use this part of the road to use their mobile phones it will only be a matter of time before there is another fatal accident. We were told that there would be a footpath and cycle track built along this route to encourage parents and children attending the school not to use vehicles to get to the school. I'm afraid that unless there was suitable crash barriers erected the entire length of the route then I would certainly not call this safe. Please feel free to walk the route at rush hour/ school start time and experience the speed of the vehicles.

There was talk of calming measures through the village to reduce the danger to school children and their parents. We have had average speed cameras installed in the village for the last year and I am yet to find anyone who has been prosecuted for excess speed and know that they are not working. As a result the constant stream of heavy good vehicles and cars are still rattling through the village far in excess of the 30 mph speed limit. The only way that this could be overcome is to build a bypass around the village. Any other calming measures would bring the vehicle to a standstill along the High Road causing more pollution and inconvenience for the residence on this route.

We would like to recommend that any new school should be built closer to where the need has been identified. This should be closer to Shortstown and New Cardington and it could be that there needs to be compulsory purchase of land to fulfil this need. This would allow children and their parents to walk safely to and from their place of education, reducing the need for vehicles and giving them the exercise needed in the modern world we live in.

Thank you for the information provided at the consultation meeting at Cotton End Village Hall on Friday evening and your answers to questions I had asked during the meeting and when we spoke after, firstly whilst you were still on stage and later at the rear of the hall whilst with your colleague Colin Foster and some other village residents.

Whilst with you and Colin, I expressed concerns about how the consultation had been handled. Adding to this, I wish to ask if the residents of Shortstown have been consulted? After all, it will be them that will have to travel with their children by whatever means along the A600 High Road to the proposed new school having been sold properties in Shortstown having been told by the developers and estate agents that Shortstown had a new primary school! Have those already resident been made aware and are the potential buyers being made aware of it's inadequacy and your proposals? I am sure they will be unhappy along with the residents of Cotton End!

How this situation has arisen was the line of part of my questioning during the meeting. You stated that the shortfall was due to a change in guidelines on the number of school places required per property since planning permission had been granted for the Bellway and Fosbern schemes. You could not tell me when these guidelines changed, but offered to find out when it was and I would appreciate it if you could do so together with the relevant guideline figures before and present.

You also offered to have additional copies of the proposed site plan available for collection by residents at The Bell PH. Is there any chance you could email a PDF of it to me as I have access to an A1 colour printer?

Something positive that came from the conversation with you, Colin and the other residents after the meeting was their suggestion that a new school could be built on the playing fields at Shortstown Village Hall. It seems so obvious, but your reactions gave the impression that this had not been considered and you were not aware of the ownership of the land.

I have researched the planning history of Shortstown Village Hall and, although it gives no clues on ownership, it showed up that planning permission was granted by Bedford Borough Council for three different schemes, references 00/01581/FUL, 03/00053/FUL and 06/01260/FUL, the latter one being the scheme that was eventually developed. Interestingly, the 2003 application was made jointly by Eastcotts Parish Council and Bedfordshire County Council and was for a 'New Village Hall, nursery and associated car parking' and on viewing the drawings, the scheme was referred to as 'Shortstown Sure Start', ie a Childcare Centre, many of which are run by Bedford Borough Council today. The relevance of this is that the land must have been considered as available for use by local government. Why not a school today?

After the meeting, I recalled further land within Shortstown that was discussed during Eastcotts Parish Council meetings I attended whilst a parish councillor for a five month period during 2015. I believe that Eastcotts Parish Council are still in negotiations with TDS, (not sure who this is), to agree a commuted sum to allow adoption of the land. I attach an aerial photo from Google Earth showing Shortstown Village Hall and playing fields and the land in question. It stretches south from the former Shortstown Lower School site to the rear of houses in Hunter Close, Shackleton Close and Brabazon Close. I believe it also includes the land to the rear of houses in Sunderland Place that stretches across to the Shortstown Village Hall playing fields. Could this land not be used?

Anyway, I hope you will seriously consider the two alternative locations above and I look forward for the data requested and the PDF of the proposed school site plan.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sirs,

SCHOOL CONSULTATIONS

- COTTONENDPRIMARY SCHOOL – EXPANSION FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

We have been made aware of the above consultation and carefully read the proposals in the document available at:

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/schools_consultations.aspx

Having read the document, we wish to express our objections to the proposals for the following reasons:

Eastcotts:

- Eastcotts has been a civil parish in the county of Bedfordshire since 1866 – it is not a single settlement, it comprises of many.
- As well as the hamlets of Harrowden and Herrings Green, Eastcotts parish is home to the historic village of Cotton End, see history at link below:

<http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/CottonEnd/CottonEndIndexOfPages.aspx>

- A century ago, Shorts Brothers bought land in the parish to build airships there and established a settlement they named Shortstown to house it's workers. Large scale housing development with planning approval already in place is ongoing here on sites where the former airship works buildings and an RAF base were situated.

The proposals state that:

- *'There is population expansion in the area around the school.....'*
- *'The increase in population is due to housebuilding in the Eastcotts area.'*
- *'Without the ... places ... this proposal will provide, the Local Authority would be reliant upon ... finding places away from where families live (giving rise to additional travel ...'*

In response to these statements:

- The population of Cotton End is approximately 700 to 800. Population expansion in the village will be minimal from small scale developments currently with planning permission.
- The increasing population is specifically in Shortstown, not in Cotton End.
- Cotton End is away from where the families live in Shortstown and will give rise to additional travel.

Conclusion:

- The village of Cotton End with a population of 700 to 800 and no major approved plans that would increase this considerably has no need for a school for 630 pupils aged 4 to 11. In fact, the 92 places currently provided at the existing school are adequate to meet the needs of families living in the village.
- In granting planning permission for the large scale housing development at Shortstown, Bedford Borough Council should have considered then the requirements of the families that would live there and ensured that adequate schooling was provided for them within that settlement. Some consideration must have been given as a new primary school was incorporated within the new development but it is inadequate. Therefore, quoting from it's own report, it has failed in it's *'...duty to secure a sufficiency of school places'* in the developments it has permitted there.
- Making parents transport their children from Shortstown by car or by public transport or on foot alongside a busy 40mph A class trunk road to the next settlement is not the solution. What is would be the acquiring of land or securing of land from the developers in Shortstown for another new school within that settlement.
- The proposed site for the new school forms a small part of what is presently farmland in the ownership of Bedford Borough Council. A wide belt of farmland stretching from Shortstown to Cotton End was included in the latest Local Plan 2035 as *potential* development land for housing which

could in effect join the two settlements. These plans are not approved and therefore cannot be used in projections for schooling requirements.

- Furthermore, Bedford Borough Council would be the beneficiaries of vast sums of money from the sale of their land to developers. They therefore have a strong vested interest in pushing the proposed school development through and opening up the farmland in their ownership for housing development.

- Finally, as part of a Community Governance Review, Bedford Borough Council is attempting to silence the voice of Cotton End on Eastcotts Parish Council by reducing the split of Councillors from 10 for Shortstown and 5 for Cotton End to 13 and 2 respectively whilst at the same time forcing large scale development upon the village by way of a new school and housing which would swallow up the village and merge it into Shortstown.

We will also be representing ourselves at the consultation meeting at Cotton End Village Hall on Friday 16th December 2016. Mrs x was born and grew up in Cotton End, as did her mother. Mr x s parents were born and grew up in Willington and Wootton and Mr x grew up in Willington and Bedford. It is these local village roots that saw us choose to return to live in the village of Cotton End in 2014. We are appalled at Bedford Borough Council's attempts to destroy an historic local village within it's governance.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Sirs,

SCHOOL CONSULTATIONS

- COTTONENDPRIMARY SCHOOL - EXPANSION FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

Further to our email of 6th December 2016, (see forwarded email after this one), expressing our objections to the proposals, and attendance of the public consultation event held by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) at Cotton End Village Hall on the evening of Friday 16th December 2016, we wish to add the following further enforcing our objections to the proposals:

1. PROPOSED SCHOOL SITE & A600/TRAFFIC:

See link below for map showing Rookery Farm:

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=RoNSZH%2bhV88MHjgTYeC8gA%3d%3d&name=Land%20at%20Rookery%20Farm,%20High%20Rd,%20Cotton%20End%20-%20map.pdf>

At the event on 16th:

- a. BBC stated that Rookery Farm was the closest land in their ownership to Shortstown whose population expansion is creating the necessity for additional school places and a second primary school. From its extremities at its NNW boundary to its SSE boundary, Rookery Farm covers approximately 750m in length by approximately 250m in depth. The field for the proposed location is presently occupied by horses during summer months and the field up to the NNW boundary is used for crops. Why is BBC not proposing to use the field up to the NNW boundary? This is nearer to Shortstown and away from the centre of population of the village of Cotton End and will have less impact on its residents. The only answer provided by BBC was that there was more likelihood of archaeological finds in the NNW field than the SSW field which would delay work starting. By how long? What is the rush? What archaeological evidence do BBC have to distinguish between each end of the farm?
- b. BBC stated that the footpaths between Shortstown and Cotton End would be widened to provide a cycleway and have barriers to separate pedestrians and cyclists from traffic. There would also be traffic calming measures, including pedestrian crossings. The latter would be necessary as the footpath moves from one side of the road to the other at the entry to Cotton End and will then need to cross back again to access the school.
- c. The residents of Cotton End reminded BBC that the A600 was a trunk road and a feeder road to/from Bedford to the A1M at Baldock and that the speed limit between the two settlements was 60mph. Also, that a high proportion of traffic at peak times were HGVs, PCVs etc and that attempts to slow traffic through the village with average speed cameras was far from 100% successful.
- d. Given c. above, the residents of Cotton End were concerned for the safety of any parents and children brave enough to attempt what would be a minimum 1¼ mile walk or cycle along paths adjacent the kerb to such a busy road. The result of this would be the majority of the 630 children arriving/departing by car concentrated around two of the busiest times for traffic through the village and with an entrance at the centre of a 200m stretch of road with junctions to Hermitage Gardens, Bell Lane, Wood Lane and Trow Close which provide access for the major percentage of the population of the village to/from the A600.
- e. Based on figures provided by Karen Headland the headteacher of the existing school, just 37% of the 127 children presently attending the school (= 47) come from Cotton End. Therefore, the residents of Cotton End will bear the brunt of traffic congestion and chaos and the noise and pollution it will bring and the risk of accidents from an entrance opposite four junctions for the benefit of almost 600 children from another settlement in exchange for little benefit for them!

2. ALTERNATIVE SITES IN SHORTSTOWN:

- a. After the event on 16th, Mr x was party to a conversation with Fran Cox and Colin Foster of BBC and other residents, who suggested that a new school could be built on the playing fields at Shortstown Village Hall. It seemed so obvious, but the BBC reactions gave the impression that this had not been considered and they were not aware of the ownership of the land.
- b. Research of the planning history of Shortstown Village Hall gives no clues on ownership, but it shows that planning permission was granted by Bedford Borough Council for three different schemes, references 00/01581/FUL, 03/00053/FUL and 06/01260/FUL, the latter one being the scheme that was eventually developed. Interestingly, the 2003 application was made jointly by Eastcotts Parish Council and Bedfordshire County Council and was for a 'New Village Hall, nursery and associated car parking' and on viewing the drawings, the scheme was referred to as 'Shortstown Sure Start', ie a Childcare Centre, many of which are run by Bedford Borough Council today. The relevance of this is that the land must have been considered as available for use by local government. Why not a school today?
- c. There is further land within Shortstown that Eastcotts Parish Council are in negotiations to agree a commuted sum to allow adoption by them of the land. Attached is an aerial photo from Google Earth showing Shortstown Village Hall and playing fields and the land in question. It stretches south from the former ShortstownLowerSchool site to the rear of houses in Hunter Close, Shackleton Close and Brabazon Close. It also includes the land to the rear of houses in

Sunderland Place

that stretches across to the Shortstown Village Hall playing fields. Could this land not be used?

- d. The information in a. to c. above has been included today in an email to Fran Cox of BBC and this has been copied to Colin Foster and Mayor Dave Hodgson of BBC.

3. BEDFORD BC PLANNING & SCHOOL PROVISION:

- a. Bellway submitted an outline planning application in 1999 ref: 99/00570/OUT which included up to 1200 homes on the former RAF Cardington site.
- b. BBC's 'Land at Shortstown Development Brief' was adopted by BBC on 29th January 2003 incorporating amendments following consultations late 2002.
- c. Frontier Estates submitted an outline planning application in 2005 ref: 05/01332/OUT which included up to 600 homes.
- d. With knowledge of all of this and its anticipated population expansion and projected school place requirements, BBC proceeded with a scheme to build a new school centrally in the enlarged town of Shortstown with a capacity for 420 pupils (= 7 years x 2 classes x 30).

- e. The new ShortstownPrimary School opened as recently as September 2013 and at the same time the old ShortstownLowerSchool was transferred to developers, demolished and 39 homes built in its place. Quoting BBC's website press release from November 2013 on the new school opening: *'The new school replaces the previous one FormEntryShortstownLowerSchool, and will accommodate extra pupils from the increase in housing development in the local area. With a national crisis in primary school places on the horizon, the new ShortstownPrimary School is another illustration of how the crisis has been averted in Bedford Borough. This has involved careful planning to identify and meet demand via an ongoing programme of major, targeted investment in expanded or new schools, of which Shortstown Primary is another example.'* See: http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_news/archived_news/november_2013/shortstown_primary.aspx
- f. At the event on 16th, in response to questions from Mr x, Fran Cox of BBC confirmed that the projections for school places they are working to are based only on housing developments that currently have planning permission in Shortstown, ie they include for the 1200 and 600 homes in a. and c. above. They make no allowance for any future development on sites marked as potential housing sites in the Local Plan 2035.
- g. Given in excess of 11 years knowledge of the developments currently under construction or with planning permission, Mr x asked Fran Cox of BBC why had they had not made adequate provision for schooling within Shortstown? Her reply was that government guidelines had changed on the number of school places required per property since planning permission had been granted for the Bellway and Frontier schemes. She could not say when these guidelines changed, but offered to find out when it was. Mr x has today emailed her to request this together with the relevant guideline figures before and present.
- h. After the Q&A session at the event on 16th, Fran Cox of BBC agreed with Mr x that it was a mistake to transfer the old school to the developers and for it to be demolished.
- i. Finally, are there any negotiations ongoing or planned with the respective developers to release further land on the former RAF Cardington site for provision of another school? Are there any open spaces within the developments that could provide a site? Surely it is within the developers interests as if it gets out that there is inadequate schooling in Shortstown, it may adversely affect sales of properties?

4. CONSULTATION PROCESS:

The consultation process has been handled in an unsatisfactory way by BBC:

- a. BBC has made no public announcement of the consultation process, ie by way of public announcements in local newspapers, letters to residents in affected areas, or public notices posted around the affected areas. It appears that only CottonEndPrimary School was made aware of it at its start on 23rd November 2016. Residents of Cotton End who stand to be affected most by the proposals were only made aware because a resident discovered by chance something via the school and took it upon themselves to print enough copies of the four page document and post them with a covering note through the door of every property in the village.
- b. BBC has failed to clearly identify the location of the proposed school. The consultation document includes no site location plan and simply refers to it being 'opposite' the existing school. This is away from the centre of the village and at its northern end, closest to Shortstown where BBC say the population expansion is that requires additional school places. At the public consultation event on 16th, there were just a few

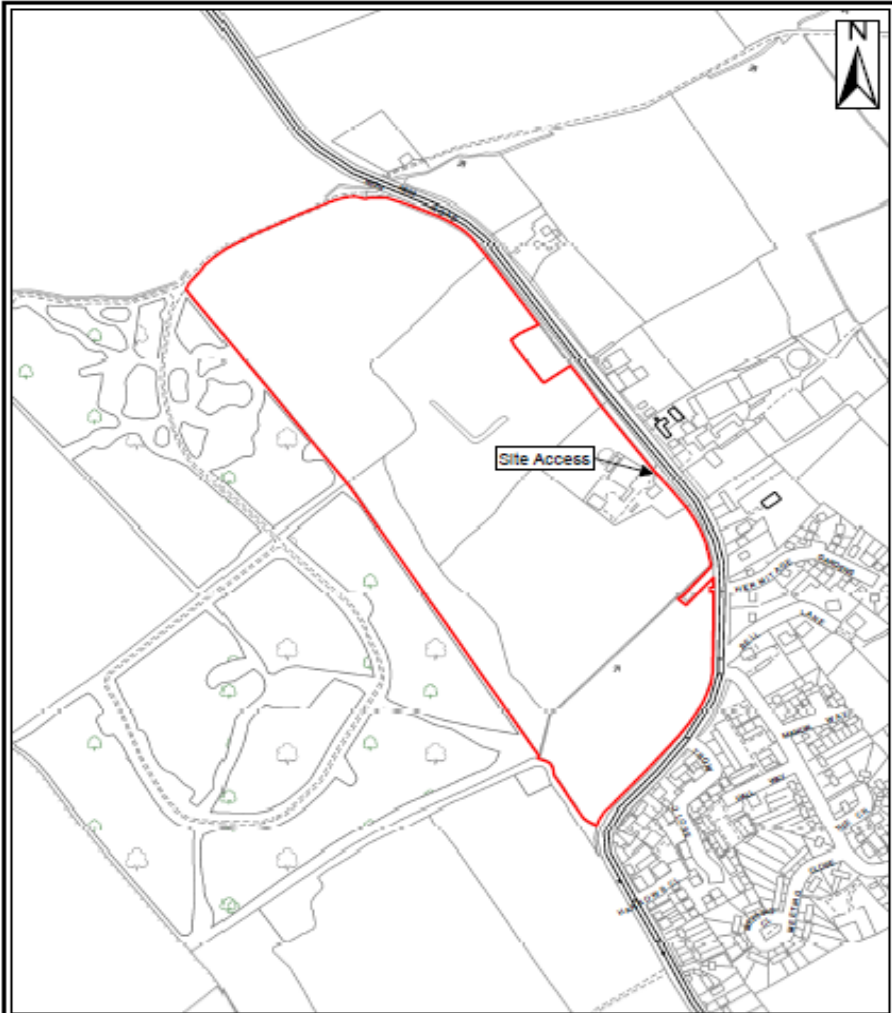
copies of a site plan available, as we understand was the case at the event on 5th. There were no copies clearly displayed. We do not have a copy and have only caught a glimpse of one, but have seen that the location of the proposed school is actually several hundred meters from the existing school and in the centre of the village. It is not 'opposite'!

- c. The event on 16th was hosted by Colin Foster of BBC with talks by Fran Cox of BBC and Karen Headland the headteacher of the existing school. A question and answer session followed. The event was advertised as '6pm to 8pm'. Mr x got to ask questions and received answers that left him with further questions which he thought he would ask later to allow others the opportunity to ask theirs. However, Colin Foster ended the Q&A session abruptly at 7:15pm with many of the 80 or so present, including Mr x still with raised hands and questions to ask. Although Colin Foster, Fran Cox and Mayor Dave Hodgson remained to talk one to one until around 8pm, everybody would have better benefited by hearing those conversations publicly.
- d. Given the failings of BBC in relation to Cotton End residents highlighted in a. above, have the residents of Shortstown been consulted? After all, it will be them that will have to travel with their children by whatever means along the A600 High Road to the proposed new school having been sold properties in Shortstown having been told by the developers and estate agents that Shortstown had a new primary school! Have those already resident been made aware and are the potential buyers being made aware of it's inadequacy and your proposals? I am sure they will be unhappy along with the residents of Cotton End!

We will continue to object to the proposals as:

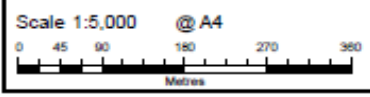
- It is unfair on the residents of Cotton End to have to house a school at the centre of the village for children more than 90% of which will travel to the village from another settlement when it already has a school capable of supporting its own needs.
- It is unfair that the families that have chosen to make their home on the modern and carefully planned New Cardington development at Shortstown have been let down by Bedford Borough Council's town planning failures and will be forced into '*additional travel*' along a busy A class trunk road to the next settlement for primary school education.

Yours faithfully,



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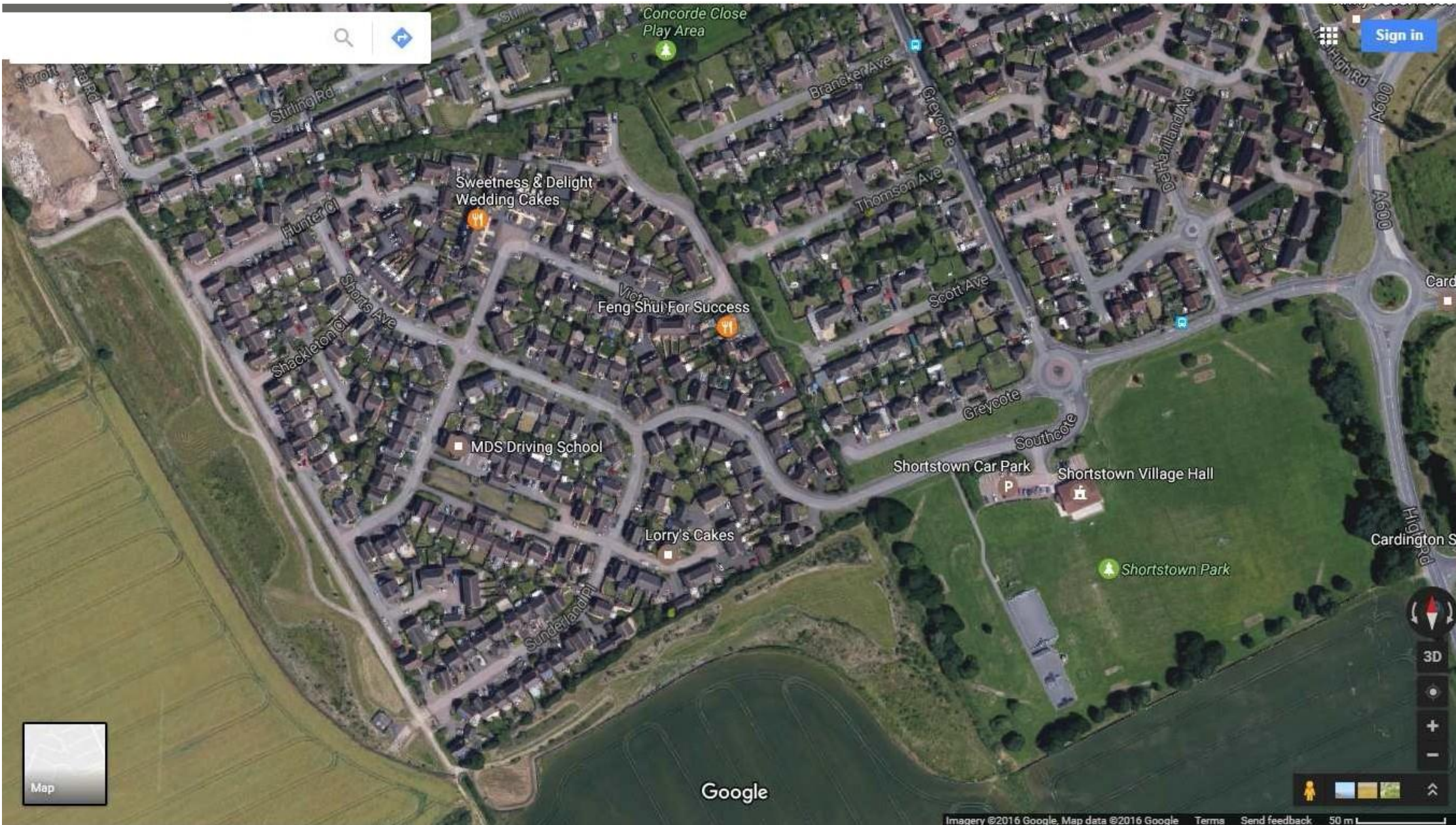
Rookery Farm, High Road, Cotton End



Drawn By: LJW
Date: 19 February 2014

Property Services
Bedford Borough Council





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Map

Google



3D





Shortstow Primary

SHORTSTOWN PRIMARY IS NOW OPEN!

A Bedford Borough village has celebrated the opening of a brand new primary school, as the Council's major investment programme in school buildings and facilities continues. The official opening of Shortstow Primary School, which opened on schedule at the beginning of the autumn term, took place on Thursday 24th October. The two form entry school was formally opened by Mayor Dave Hodgson.

The new school replaces the previous one Form Entry Shortstow Lower School, and will accommodate extra pupils from the increase in housing development in the local area.

With a national crisis in primary school places on the horizon, the new Shortstow Primary School is another illustration of how the crisis has been averted in Bedford Borough. This has involved careful planning to identify and meet demand via an ongoing programme of major, targeted investment in expanded or new schools, of which Shortstow Primary is another example.

The building has been designed and built by Willmott Dixon. During the building phase, Willmott Dixon worked closely with the Head teacher, Denise Cottam, to ensure the completed building met the needs of the school. Also, pupils from the previous school, staff members and members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) visited the site to view the building progress - from the first dig, up to the end of the summer term.

Mayor Dave Hodgson said: "The children themselves were able to see their new school taking shape, and I know that there was a lot of excitement and anticipation about this brand new facility. It was a real pleasure to help formally open the school now that it is up and running and I wish all the pupils and staff the very best for an enjoyable and successful future for Shortstow Primary School.

Cllr Henry Vann, Portfolio Holder for Education at Bedford Borough Council, said: "Shortstow Primary provides the right amount of classroom space for inspirational teaching and learning to take place. Through a vision of 'Creating Excellent Teaching and Learning Spaces', Bedford Borough Council is investing millions of pounds on school builds to ensure that every child within Bedford Borough will have a place at school for the foreseeable future."

Head teacher, Denise Cottam, said: "The new school provides the opportunity for our children to succeed in an aspirational setting. The commitment of staff, families, community and Bedford Borough are what makes the school great. We wanted to ensure the ethos of the school moved with us into the new building, and on the opening day we saw that it had."

With regards to school's admissions for this year, Bedford Borough Council made sure that over 99% of parents have secured a place for their child at a school of their choice. The Council is consistently in the top group of local authorities for securing 'first preference' figures.

18 out of the 19 Local Authority maintained schools inspected by Ofsted last year were judged to be either good or outstanding - that's 94%.

Last year, schools in Bedford Borough were praised after the Local Authority area was recognised by Ofsted as offering one of the best opportunities in the country for children to attend a good or outstanding primary school. Schools in Bedford Borough were ranked as 11th out of 150 local authorities across the country and number one in the Eastern region, with 87% of children attending a good or outstanding lower or primary school.

For further information on Shortstow Primary go to <http://www.shortstowprimary.co.uk/>

Don't Miss



In this section find out about the makeup of Bedford Borough Council and who your local councillors are. You can also find out how to register for elections, submit FOI enquiries and more.

Related Links

[Council Departments](#)

Further to my email of Sunday, please see emails below from the Clerk to Eastcotts Parish Council who has kindly clarified the situation with regards to the playing fields at Shortstown Village Hall ruling them out as a potential site for a new school. She does however also provide some more information regards the land south of the former school site I brought to your attention in my email which sounds promising and worth you following up.

Hoping soon to receive the data you said you could provide me on school place requirements and when it changed and also a PDF of the proposed school site layout would be greatly appreciated as I have seen no more than a passing glimpse of it.

Thanking you in anticipation of your reply.

Yours sincerely

Thank you for your email of 5th and the pupil yield data. Shame about the land at Shortstown!

I have been investigating the archaeological information relating to Rookery Farm, Cotton End and particularly the northernmost field you have discounted on the basis of archaeology. This has proved interesting as I have discovered that the vast majority of crop marks observed on the farm from the air in 1976 and 1996 are no longer on the farm, but on Shocott Spring.

Below is the text relating to it from another email I have today sent to the 'Consulting Bedford' email address together with two copies of an aerial image from Google Earth from 2003.

I hope you will reconsider carefully the northernmost field of Rookery Farm as it does appear to be a serious option and kindly request that you consult with your archaeology colleagues in planning who will hopefully agree with my findings.

Thank you and regards,

I believe you are the person who needs to be contacted regarding the above.

Firstly may I point out that we are a small village and the village school as it is has a huge association with the village going back over 130 years. My husband's family were the first to attend and over the years many generations of our family have attended here. Even now people have moved to the

village due to it being a small village school with a solid education record. Parents are very upset that their children cannot attend Cotton End School due to children from other areas taking up places.

At a recent meeting in the village hall we found out that more than half the children come from mostly Shortstown and some from the surrounding area. We now find out that a new school which will accommodate 630+ children is to be built and not in the most appropriate place.

I live opposite the field which has been indicated as where the school will be built. I have no problem with its placement except for the following reasons.

1. This road is a major road into Bedford and the accident rate is high in fact someone was killed on this road over Christmas. In the past my friend, a young mother with 3 children was also killed right where the entrance to the new school is proposed to be.
2. Due to heavy traffic the amount of dangerous exhaust emissions from these vehicles would be detrimental to the health of the children. This will affect them not only in the school but primarily in the playground and when playing sports which would be next to the road.
3. The entrance to the school from this major road would be dangerous with traffic slowing down to gain access into the school which could cause more accidents. I cannot see any safety measures that will adequately solve this.
4. With 630+ children attending, the school would cause more traffic taking and collecting children from other areas. This includes those in the village who take their children to school by car. This could mean an extra 500 cars or more on the road depending how many children in one family are attending. We already have around 38,000 cars on this road every week.
5. If the entrance is at either the end of Trow Close, Wood Lane or Hermitage Gardens then this would cause even more problems for those living here. It is already horrendous getting onto the High Road as it is. I myself live near the corner and now have to turn left up to the Wilstead turn to turn around and get back on the road to Bedford.
6. If, as we were told by your representative, the Education Dept and the Council make forecasts of how many people will be moving to the area and calculating how many school places are needed 10 years in advance, what happened with the new Shortstown School? It was explained that more houses were built than was thought, but we villagers knew where this was going. We all knew that once the builders got their hands on land there, they would reach out for more. Why didn't the council and education Dept know and make provision for this with Shortstown School. This was a huge mistake which it seems once again Cotton End must pay this price.
7. We have been told that the government believe it's reasonable for children as young as 3/4 to walk the distance from Shortstown to Cotton End. Would you let your child walk along an A road where cars go 60 miles and more an hour? Would they? I think not. Even I as an adult wouldn't even ride a bike on this road let along a child walk.
8. We were told the path between the villages would be repaired and widened but the path cannot be made wider due to a ditch running along side. The parish council were told years ago that Anglian Water own this ditch and would not consider widening the path.
9. If the school was built in any of the fields the council own along the High Road, they will be building on green belt land which is also a flood plain. As we have seen in the past, building on flood plains causes flooding in surround areas.

It came to my notice at a residents meeting last week, that a piece of land at Shortstown has been earmarked for a pub. What in your opinion is more important. An annex / extension of the school for children of Shortstown to attend so that these children don't have to walk or be driven to Cotton End, or a pub!!! If a new school was built on this land then Shortstown children attending Cotton End could go there, making room for children who actually

live here being able to attend the village school. There are several families here whose children have to attend schools out of the village as they don't have the space which is deplorable. The current head mistress stated that even when, not if mind you but WHEN the new school is built, children from the village may still not be able to attend as places were on a first come first serviced basis.

It is also believed by a vast amount of residents that if the school were to be built, then the other fields belonging to the council will be sold for building. We all know how cash strapped the council is so this would be very lucrative to them.

Another point is we have found out that the builders are having trouble with selling houses. If this happens and there are 100's of empty houses, then the new school could be half empty.

Please look at my comments as to why such a big school should NOT be built in Cotton End.

Just one more point which is a very important one. Why was it that not one single person in Cotton End knew about the consultation meeting? Why was it that it took one parent who was looking at the school website to find out about it. I, along with others felt it was intended that we did not find out especially as when we got to the meeting no chairs were out for attendees. Also your representatives seemed somewhat surprised to see us. We were told it was an administrative error but as I worked for the council for 15 years I doubt that.

Sirs

Having looked at the website I am confused about the consultation dates and was unable to bring up the link in the document issued at the village meeting on 16th December.

However my comments as a local resident who lives almost opposite the planned school are as follows:

I can fully understand the need for more school places for the population of Shortstown. But it is appalling that proper provision was not planned for and shows a very unprofessional and inadequate side to the relevant planning departments.

Having seen the traffic chaos currently experienced with the present size of Cotton End school to multiply this several times over is unimaginable. It is incredible that there has not already been a serious accident at those times of day.

Having grandchildren at Elstow Primary School I am well acquainted with the traffic problems there too – and that is only a 2 form entry, sited on a quiet local road. Staggered times are only of limited benefit.

Cotton End is on a main trunk road with commercial traffic going through all day, also the site is on a major bend. The bus stop is situated where the new school will be. All traffic to/from Wood Lane has to gain access to the High Road from the junction at The Bell Pub. All of this along with several

hundred possible cars will be a disaster waiting to happen.

The footpath from Shortstown to Cotton End is not safe even for current usage as the HGVs cause a draft when passing by pedestrians. Cyclists often end up on the footpath because of safety concerns.

The concept of 'kiss and drop off' sounds helpful but is totally impractical for this age range. No parent of a child under say age 7 would want to just let their child be dropped off. A parent has to see their child to the relevant area along with all their belongings. Also this in no way addresses the issue of collection at the end of the day. Parents of under 9s need to collect their children from classrooms and therefore must park up to do so. Even those children who can leave by themselves need their parent to be able to park to let their child into the car. The majority of children will not be Cotton End residents so vehicles could well exceed the normal expected rate for a school.

Those arriving/leaving for Breakfast and After School Clubs will only be a minority and have little effect on the main traffic flows.

Whilst my husband and I have no objection in principle to the school the Health and Safety issues linked with the traffic are of great concern.

My suggestion is ideally to put in a bypass for the village. Alternatively a perimeter road round the edge of the complete school site with a one way driving system could work. This would enable parents to park on one side of the road and the cars to pass through on the other side. This in addition to regular staff and visitor car parking. However this does not address the difficulty caused by the sheer volume of traffic entering/leaving at school times trying to do so alongside the regular traffic through the village and the difficulty for locals trying to gain access to the main road. All of which can cause major frustration for people with potential for drivers trying to take chances resulting in grief.

Yours

Dear Sir/Madam,

I attended the public consultation evening at the Cotton End Village Hall on 16 December 2016 and I got the impression that the majority of residents oppose to the relocation and expansion of Cotton End Primary School. I moved to the area in 2009 and in that time I have seen an increase in traffic, especially HGV's and accidents along the main A600, especially since the A421 opened. It doesn't make sense to build a school on a busy road putting the safety of children at risk, as all residential property is on the other side of the road meaning all children would have to cross the busy road to attend. Where the current school is located there is already safety issues, with parents parking and turning in roads irresponsibly and I have seen a few near misses. How many primary schools in Bedfordshire are built on a main A road?

As I am aware most of the children attending are from outside Cotton End, mostly from the New Cardington development and surrounding areas. We should be looking to expand or develop near to Shortstown Primary School, originally this was on the old A600, but they decided to build a ring road

round it for the safety of the children. The same should apply for Cotton End Primary School. There is a large piece of land next to the village hall at Shortstown off the main road, which I believe belongs to the parish, maybe an expansion of Shortstown Primary?

I have seen the current site zoning plan and I am aware that it is only a guide. But, I have noticed the parking and drop off points are opposite 3 junctions, which are already a nightmare to get out of onto the A600 at peak times. To add another junction would increase congestion further, there will be queues through the village and going in and out of the school grounds, as most of the children (at full capacity of 420 by 2022), will be driven to school because the majority are not from Cotton End, parents will abandon their vehicles on the roadside and residential streets to avoid the queues, like they currently do.

Most schools allow children from outside the catchment area, as you can appreciate finding a place for your child within your area is difficult. Most parents will drive to place their child at the next best school. This is happening due to children from Bedford attending the local Shortstown School, resulting in children from Shortstown/ New Cardington attending Cotton End Primary. I feel more investment should be made to schools in the town because this is where the problem originates from. By investing in the town schools or the expansion of Shortstown Primary, this would enable Cotton End Primary to remain as a village school, as it has done so for over 140 years.

Kind regards

We do not need another school, as it will bring traffic, we on the High Road have complained for many years, as traffic (lorrys etc) shake the houses nobody has listen to us, not at all. If we have new school plus traffic. We should all be looking for compo. As it will make life unbearable, if we get compo well be able to buy peace elsewhere, isn't that so. This village can not take any more traffic I do hope you take notice I was born many many change please no more changes

Dear Sir,

I am writing to oppose the new school at Rookery Farm Cotton End.

The current school is adequate for the needs of Cotton End children, the proposed new school is for New Cardington and Shortstown children who the Council and others have totally underestimated the school place requirements, surely there must be an alternative site/sites within the New Cardington/Shortstown, surely the green fields opposite the Shortstown roundabout would make sense, especially with all the pelican crossings already in place here.

Expecting small children to walk along the very busy and dangerous A600 appalls us.

Since the A421 has opened through traffic has increased dramatically - hence the need for average speed cameras.

More and more HGV's and emergency vehicles are using the A600 taking little notice of the 30mph speed limit.

Since moving here 46 years ago from being a nice quiet village the noise and vibrations to our homes along High Road Cotton End has become a nightmare to all residents

Adding a school on the opposite side of the road from where all Cotton End children are is just crazy.

The Council and Bellway wanted the houses in New Cardington its up to them to find somewhere to build a school in New Cardington - not Cotton End.

Everyones safety is to be put in peril whether on foot or in a vehicle

Road calming measures will not work with 4 junctions already in place it can take at least 5mins to get onto the A600 now during peak times.

4

Pollution levels already high with over half of vehicles using diesel. In the same stretch of road there are 2 bus stops running half hourly + many school buses. Accidents over the years have claimed lives, the most recent Christmas Day 2016, and some years ago a mother lost her life taking her children to school crushed by a HGV opposite your proposed site.

Have all residents got to leave home before 7.00AM or after 9.30AM because if this goes ahead the A600 through our village will become a car park with tailbacks miles each way - more pollution.

Has any consideration been given to the proposed East/West railway line which will cross the A600 south of Cardington Hangers.

It beggars belief that it is necessary to build a school taking 630 pupils as a primary school - surely too big for 4 year olds starting school most of which will be taken by car - 4x4's etc more pollution for us all.

Why was Shortstawn primary school knocked down? Elstow Abbey school stands empty - waste of money - council has no money where is £8.000000 coming from? Tax payers again!

Yours faithfully

Consultation on the Expansion of School Premises at Great Denham School

Background Papers

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the plans to expand Great Denham Primary school.

I have only one reservation which is around the parking around the school which I am concerned that this will only get worse. Currently people park down Muirfield Close and do not use the carpark which is opposite the school. This causes a lot of congestion within the close and often the drivers are inconsiderate of the people who live in the area. Often they park over drive ways, try and turn round in the middle of the road, and block people in their own drives. The school has on numerous occasions tried to send out emails advising parents not to park there but it is always ignored.

I am a resident in this close and I am really worried as I have a little boy who I have to watch so carefully because of the crazy driving and parking around the school. I have even seen parents abandoned their car in the road just to drop off their child.

I understand that residents do not want road markings put in place to stop parking which again I can understand as it is really limited around our area and this will then become a problem for people visiting. However, a suggestion would be that there was a warden from the school or a traffic warden from the council trying to manage this just during school parking time. This would be really appreciated as I am sure as the school increases this problem will only get worse and there will be an accident.

Thank you.

Hello,

I am writing to inform you that as a new resident of Great Denham and the father of a young child, I support the expansion of the local primary school to increase capacity. It is my intention to send my son to this school when he reaches admission age.

As little impact as possible should be made to the outside space already available to the children. But the opportunity to create architecturally inspiring and light space shouldn't be missed from this great opportunity. I hope the design of additional buildings aren't just an 'office block' bolt on.

Regards

Hi

I support the school expansion but this must be in conjunction with increased parking at the school, and the school committing to engage with the community to improve the parking of parents in and around the school at drop off and pick up times.

The Borough Council has failed to engage with residents in GD to establish what the problems are. There was a proposal for parking restrictions in and around Muirfield but this didn't get anywhere and seems to have been abandoned by the Borough and the school.

The Borough Council needs to get a grip on parking throughout Great Denham. The developers have run rings around the council, and we now having parking problems on every road. What should have been a fantastic development is getting worse as time goes on, and the Borough need to act to improve things.

Who will be paying the £2M? Is it borough residents or the developers? Surely the size of the school was debated at the time of the initial build with it being obvious that it would fill up in next to no time. If David Wilson are paying that obviously helps.

Regards

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find below our responses to your consultation on expanding Great Denham Primary School.

1) Do you support or oppose the proposal that, with effect from the 2018/2019 school year intake, the school should be expanded with its admission number permanently being increased from 60 to 90?

A: Wholeheartedly support the proposal

2) Any comments you may have on the proposal including any alternative ideas or suggestions.

A: Whilst supporting the expansion of the school, we are concerned that the parking/driving in and around Kingswood Way/Greenkeepers Rd & surrounding side streets will get worse due to volume and continued bad practice. We would suggest that all possible options are explored to set & enforce a permanent 24hr 20mph speed limit in the area. Alongside this, parents should be encouraged to park in the large "park & ride" car park at the entrance to Great Denham by the imposition & enforcement of localised TROs during school hours (noting that a TRO has previously been proposed for Muirfield, but was rejected because some residents objected, despite residents' complaints about parking). Finally, please ensure that sufficient land is protected from housing development as the building consortium (lead by DWH) in Great Denham is quite over-zealous in grabbing whatever green space it can!

3) In what capacity/capacities you are responding

A: We are local residents and parents of children attending GDPS.

Kind regards

Great Denham Primary school is amazing. If the senior leadership team feel that it can retain its outstanding approach to education with this expansion, then I am in favour. The more children who can experience the magic of learning at Great Denham the better - I wish that all schools in the area could have a similar approach! It is a flagship school and deserves all the recognition and funding that they can get.

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed expansion of Great Denham primary school.

Unless there is a proposal for an additional primary school to be built in the area I see that it is without question completely necessary to increase the current yearly intake. I do express concerns that consideration should be made as to whether 90 will be a sufficient information air number in 5 years time.

I express my concerns as a parent to a 1 year old who will be looking for a place in this school in a few years time.

With kind regards,

**Consultation on the Expansion of School Premises at Bromham CofE Lower
School**

Background Papers

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have recently seen the Consultation Document on the proposed changes to Bromham Lower School resulting from the decision to move to a 2-tier education system. http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/consultations/idoc.ashx?docid=9af95a49-54ad-4c94-ad53-951b0702290e&version=-1

In addition, as you may be aware, the Bromham Parish Council are currently in the process of finalising the Neighbourhood Plan for the village which also mentions the proposal to increase the size of the Lower School but that there is also a possibility of relocating the School to a new site elsewhere in the Village.

I would comment as follows:

1. Your Consultation Document makes no mention of moving to another site and clearly pre-empts the Parish Council's decisions on their Neighbourhood Plan. In my view it makes your Consultation incomplete and less comprehensive.
2. If the proposal to expand the Lower School is not acceptable, what other alternatives are available and why were they not included in the Consultation Document?
3. Does the size of the proposed school accurately reflect the demographic changes which are due to take place in the Bedford area?
4. How does the proposed school catchment area compare with the present school catchment?

5. If there is a difference in the catchment area, what effect will this have on journeys to school?

6. A proposed doubling of the school size must have a significant effect on traffic and parking in the area. What effect will the proposed changes have on the present arrangements for children to make their way to school?

7. If this Consultation is to be meaningful, the Council must have an alternative(s) to suggest should the public response be unfavourable. If so, what are the alternatives?

I am hoping to attend the Open Evening at Bromham VC Lower School on Monday 28th Novemebr at 7.00pm when I hope that at least some of my questions will be answered/

Yours faithfully,

hi

my comments in relation to the application to go 3 class entry are

1. Need

Where is the need, this has not been demonstrated, surely with the Ouse Valley Primary opening just across the river along with Gt Denham expanding, there is little local need, especially as there are no upcoming housing developments planned in Bromham in the near future, any need can be better provided by more centrally located Primary Schools

2. Location

The existing school is on 2 sites quite far apart, these have limited space for expansion and would involve using the existing playing fields, whereon are upwards of 600 pupils going to play at break times, the current school is within residential areas with very limited access and would be away from any new residential developments, the current site is not fit for expansion

3. Parking

the school suffers horrendously from parking issues currently which are a danger and have been noted by the parish council and Councillor

Rigby, the increase in class size would mean upwards of 250 extra car journeys at the beginning and end of day, the local roads and community just cannot cope, pupils attending now are driven to school and any future pupils would be even further away

Conclusion

While the school needs to become primary this should be called at a 2 class entry with additional class sizes added at a new purpose built location once the school has demonstrated that it can be an outstanding Primary School, the school should concentrate on its current pupils rather than chase after this ill thought out proposal. The school is trying to do too much in a short space of time and is in danger of overstressing itself.

Bromham Primary is a stand alone school and is not federated to other schools, there are better equipped local Primary Schools who are in Federations that can offer them experience and assistance to expand.

Regards

Dear Consulting Bedford,

I write as a parent of children attending the school and as a resident of Bromham living near to the school sites.
I oppose the development for the following reasons.

- 1) Traffic is already heavy along both Grange Lane and Village Road. The enlarged intake will almost all arrive by car as they will be from new developments on the outskirts of the village so we would expect traffic to roughly triple from current levels. Parking is already inadequate and will expand along neighbouring roads. Parking during school events already extends down Neville Crescent even when the village hall car park is used.
- 2) Staff parking is already full and staff cars will make congestion on neighbouring roads worse. Thus creating a hazard for the children who walk to school and a loss of amenity for residents.
- 3) I appreciate it would be more expensive but with substantial further expansion already planned in Bromham I believe it would be better to build a second school near the planned new developments.

4) Expansion can only come at the expense of the playing field and yet with nearly twice as many pupils the playing field area should be doubling not shrinking.

5) The change to a primary school has already affected local football and forced the Under 7s to move to alternate less convenient pitches. Again with the village population expected to increase the council should be increasing recreational facilities not building on them.

6) The school catering facilities and hall are not suitable for the increased number of pupils and would also need to be roughly doubled in size.

7) As a parent I place no value on increased range of teaching specialisms and believe this will be countered by the loss of the sense of community that exists in a normal sized school. Most of the primary schools in the borough are the current size of Bromham Lower and the results are better than the national average. Upper school policy has been to concentrate pupils in vast out of town schools and the results are below average despite the head start at KS2. Applying the failed policy to primary schools does not make sense and I have no wish for my children's education to be compromised in this way.

Best regards

**Consultation on the Expansion of School Premises at Wootton Lower School
Background Papers**

I fully support the proposed new build and increasing the 2018/2019 intake to 120, Wootton is expanding at an alarming rate and with the new development for 600 houses starting early next year there will be a shortage of places in Wootton for wootton school children therefore we need to insure this takes place for their benefit.

I am against the expansion from 90 to 120 places. However I feel this proposal offers no choice at all. It implies the extra spaces will be offered it's just whether it will be on a permanent or 'permanently' temporary basis, and therefore without resources.

As a result I feel I have to support the proposed expansion but with my hands tied behind my back. I feel that 90 children per year is more than enough for a village lower school and 120 is unmanageable. How do you have a Christmas play with 120 4 year olds?

If there really is a need for an extra 30 children per year then why did the council not build a new school rather than doubling the existing infrastructure. I'm assuming the answer is money rather than it being in the interests of the children or the village.

Whilst there is room to build at Harris Way, where is the extra space going to come from at Bedford Road? By losing some of the playing field I assume? In addition the hall at Bedford Road is not fit for purpose with the current numbers. Expansion will render events such as the Christmas Fete untenable.

I am against the expansion but would rather it be done with additional resources then be forced to stretch those we already have and end up with our children being taught in porta cabins for the next 20 years.

I write my views as a parent of two - my eldest is currently in reception and my youngest will start in Sept 2020.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration

Dear sir,

I am writing in regard to the consultation for Wootton Lower School expansion to four form entry. As both a parent and a school governor I agree with the move to increase the PAN to 120 per school year starting at year R in 2018/19, but I have concerns.

Firstly for the period beginning 2018, many of the pupils admitted into the places may be from an area wider than the village of Wootton. This will be because an additional 30 reception age children are unlikely to be available from the designated housing south of fields road that this expansion is designed to support. This will cause ongoing problems as parents of children moving into the village may appeal to Bedford borough council for a place in future years at Wootton lower school, the likelihood of these being upheld is significant as are the consequential effect compromising standards of education within the school if it is forced to place these applications.

Secondly, the section 106 funding for the school details the provision of a primary school, to meet the needs of the village. By the time the academic year 2018/19 arrives the current year 3 children in the school may be challenged to be allocated places in year 5. Currently places as you know are being sought across the county boundary on central Bedfordshire. Holywell were significantly oversubscribed for admissions this year and by the time of applications for intake 2018/19 the village of Cranfield and other surrounding villages will also have expanded. The consequence being the likelihood that 120 Wootton lower school pupils will be applying for a significant chunk of the 150 school places available. As Cranfield lower school has increased its numbers in this year group too, the maths clearly don't add up. My point is that delaying increasing the PAN should be considered whilst the provision for year 5 children is secured.

If the provision for year 5 is not more certain, parents may choose to not apply for a place in Wootton Lower School or move to the locality and affect uptake of these new 30 places. This will have impact for the builders and financial stability of the school. These issues should also be considered before the PAN is permanently increased in this time frame.

Thank you for considering these points.

Kind regards

The Governing Body of Wootton Lower School recognises the need to provide high quality local education for the young children of Wootton and that the most obvious solution to this is to further expand the existing lower school. The provision of such high quality and local education can, however, only be achieved if fully funded in the context of the wider changes taking place.

The Governing Body therefore has some significant reservations and concerns about the increase of the permanent admission numbers to 120. The capital funding and remit to achieve this within a primary school has clearly been laid out within section 106 agreements. However, the ongoing funding for the schools operation is not being met which may lead the school to be in licensed deficit in the foreseeable future.

Firstly, the financial insecurity will be exacerbated if capital funding is not available to extend the lower school to a primary school on the second site, Bedford Road, as the local parents may choose to safeguard their children's education into a system which can guarantee places for their children in years 5,6,7 and 8. Currently these age range of places will be oversubscribed by feeder schools and parents may be left trying to find places for a mixed number of years for their children, which is wholly unacceptable to ourselves. This may cause parents not to use the extra 30 places and seek an alternative school from year R.

The second point of resistance is if the reception year group and thereafter does attract the 120 children, many of these may not be local catchment, for example the current intake of year R is accommodating 78 catchment children of the 90 available places. As the area south of Fields road becomes populated with mixed age children, the school may be forced to take increased numbers of children into the classes further up the school to accommodate these families. This will negatively influence standards that are already compromised through inadequate funding arrangements.

Meanwhile, building progress on the Fields road south site it apparent by its absence currently, there is no visual groundwork, therefore the likelihood of having families' resident to occupy these places in the stipulated time frame is increasingly unlikely. Therefore it may be more appropriate to delay the increase to 2019/20.

Thirdly, the volume of housing association homes across both sites is also having a significant impact on the social demographic of the village and increased needs and social support these children within the school. The cost of meeting this is also a challenge for the school financially maintaining achievement for these children as it does not attract adequate levels of deprivation funding to reflect this.

Despite the repeated requests of the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors, the Governors have been given no clear indication from the Borough of how it is to meet its financial obligations in the coming years either with its existing numbers or with expansion in the manner described, even though making direct enquiries. It has also become apparent that if the school were to open a further 30 places in year R and not fill all of these, lag or ghost funding may not be available for children not yet occupying all of the places. Without this guarantee, opening another class in year R is not financially viable and will compound an already bleak financial forecast.

The Governing body of Wootton Lower School care passionately about the school continuing to provide an enjoyable high quality standard of education and wrap around care to all the children of Wootton and the surrounding area, for the reasons mentioned we cannot support the increase in PAN for the stated year.

Dear Sirs

Members of Wootton Parish Council met recently to discuss the above proposal as part of an ongoing Bedford Borough Council consultation.

I have been asked to respond to the invitation to comment as follows:

- Members supported the proposal that, with effect from the 2018/19 school year intake, the school should be expanded with its admission number permanently being increased from 90 to 120.

No other comments were put forward for consideration, although I would add the resolution made was a majority decision rather than unanimous vote.

Kind regards.

**Statutory notice regarding the Expansion of School Premises at Cotton End
Primary School
Background Papers**

This document presents responses received to the Statutory Notice concerning the expansion of Cotton End Primary School . This information has been summarised in the Portfolio Holder report considered on 21st March 2017. Where details were provided which could easily identify an individual or his or her family members, this has been removed.

Hi The the proposed final capacity of 630 for Cotton end School is crazy. Many people reject to this.The surrounding area would not be able to cope. Why wasn't this built in Wotton instead?

Good afternoon

There is no doubt that a new school is needed in Eastcotts as the Shortstown school is already full and Bellway are preparing to build another large phase of family houses in Shortstown. Cotton End may well have similar development in the future.

My reservations concern location.

Pressure for admission will come from Shortstown in the first instance. While present pupils and staff will have no problems travelling to Cotton End the same is not true for Shortstown families.

1 Walking along the one narrow pavement down the A600 is exposed and too far. Traffic, including heavy lorries, is very close and often fast.

2 The current bus service is only half hourly.

3 Not everyone has a car for the school run.

4 Parking would be a nightmare with a real potential for accidents

5 Primary pupils often have younger siblings, too young for school, who also have to do the school run as well. The pavement is unsuitable for a buggy and pupil to walk alongside.

Has anyone actually walked the route from the end of the new phase near Old Harrowden Road to the proposed school site?

Is there a better site to consider which is nearer to agreed development?

I do NOT agree with the huge expansion of Cotton End Primary School!! Why dont they build another school IN Shortstown itself!! Thats where its needed!! Also do the powers that be expect children, mothers and fathers to walk from Shortstown 2 or 3 times a day?? Not every one has a car!! That would be ridiculous, crazy and dangerous!! The children would be shattered!! Stupid and crazy idea! The residents of Cotton End and Shortstown dont want it there!! So are you going to listen???????

Dear Sir / Madam.

I believe that the potential location of the new primary school is very bad. It is going to be sited on a very heavily used road, Is a long way for the children to be transported to and would require coaches to do so which would cost more every year from your buget and create more polution. A location closer to New Cardington would be better. For example the area on the Cardington side of the DVSA centre, development has not been started there yet but it is close enough for the children to walk to school, you may have to build a pedestrian bridge over the DVSC entrance road but that would cost less than transportation you could if you wished bring the children from Cotton End by a smaller quantity of coaches and also the children from Cardington. It is also on a quiet road.

I am sorry for the late sending of this email but I sent it to an inaccurate address and did not find out until today.

Dear Mr Foster

Cotton End School Expansion

Firstly may I say how disappointed I am at the lack of information regarding this consultation. The consultation dates around Christmas time 2016 were not clearly advertised or displayed to residents of Cotton End or Shortstown and were only noticed by 'pure chance' by a resident.

The site of the school appears to be of no benefit to the residents of Cotton End or Shortstown and the expansion has only come about due to the bad planning by Borough of the new Shortstown school. The percentage of pupils from Cotton End that would attend the new school would be very small compared to the total spaces available so this would not be benefitting Cotton End residents or indeed Shortstown residents as they will have to find a way of getting their children to the school. The figures that have been put forward for needing this expansion are apparently based on accurate forecasts so why was this not done when the Shortstown school was built? According to your teams presentation the local birth rate is going down yet government money allocated is driven by birth rate so this is a contradiction, this expansion is purely driven by house building which could face a decline at any time therefore meaning less demand for school places. Why can a new school not be sited somewhere in Shortstown which would much better serve the families living there, it appears easy enough to find land for housing so why can't land be found to provide facilities for the growing population, surely infrastructure should come before any planning is approved!

The plan to build a 'forest school' is a new concept for the UK so there is no guarantee that this type of school will work and £8000,000 is a lot of money to gamble on a project with no proven outcome, why not put the money in to an already good school instead of risking it on something that people will be unsure of. This new idea is supposed to keep the 'village school feel' which according to the latest ofsted report the current school has, apparently the children feel safe and happy and feel they can turn to a member of staff if they feel worried, how is this realistically going to be achieved with over 600 pupils. Another quote from your team, this will be a very good school for boys, surely it should be a good school for all genders! People want to live in Cotton End so their children can go to a small village school therefore they may end up taking them out of catchment to another school which meets this criteria creating a big divide in our parish.

The siting of the new school is not a good one adjacent to a very busy main road with heavy commercial traffic and opposite the three main village roads exiting onto this main road. Apart from the children of Cotton End having to cross this main road the children of Shortstown will have to travel possibly over a mile down this busy main road either on foot or bicycle on a narrow footpath which is a horrible if not dangerous walk, the other alternative is to travel by car increasing the traffic and parking problem which already exists. Government policy is to get people out of their cars and walking etc. but who will want to walk this dangerous route unless of course they do not have access to a vehicle and have no choice but to walk their children down this main road. The consultations so far have mentioned traffic calming measures, two roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, road humps etc. this will only cause more traffic congestion and pollution in Cotton End affecting residents and pupils far outweighing the the idea of having outside space if the children are breathing in fumes.

I can see no benefit to the residents of Cotton End or Shortstown of this over large school being constructed at the proposed site.

Dear Mr Foster

Further to my previous letter regarding the expansion of Cotton End school, I want to express my concerns over the effect that this will have on the community in Cotton End. It seems to me that regardless of the views expressed by residents of Cotton End either individually or through the residents group your department has decided to go ahead with this scheme anyway.

The plan in its existing form will site the school on land adjacent to the A600 near to the Bell Public house, there could not be a worse position for the general public, the residents of Shortstown or of Cotton End. This has been recognised by your departments representative Fran Cox at the Parish Council meeting on the 13th March where she explained the measures that would need to be put in place siting the school on the A600. These possible measures

as I understand it are as follows: Roundabouts near Harrows Close and Opposite Wood Lane, speed restrictions, road narrowing, the provision of parking bays at the side of the road, pedestrian crossings, parking restrictions and yellow lines, possibly downgrading the A600 to a "B" road. All these elements will add to the misery of the residents and to the general public trying to get to work in Bedford. With 8000 traffic movements every day and increasing I cannot see how this is in the public interest. The only effective measure which was detailed in the residents group letter, would be to have a new road to west of the proposed site therefore limiting the effect on the village. This would at least reduce the inevitable delays to the public travelling to Bedford.

It has been stated by Fran Cox that the other sites are not suitable due to standing water and to areas of archaeological interest. If indeed this were the case why has this not been investigated to prove the existence of an ancient settlement and possibly develop the site for the benefit of everyone. As the area of archaeological interest is not on all the site as with the case of Shocott Springs, why couldn't this area be where the proposed playing fields are situated? I suspect that this is simply an excuse not to build there. Similarly with regard to standing water, hydraulics engineers have in the past been able to develop systems for coping with almost any situation, with simple systems involving ditches and drains to move water away or if necessary pumping systems to remove excess water. I believe that the costs involved would not be as much as those necessary for the proposed plan.

I would welcome any type of school that promotes the best in education for our children including the idea of a Forest School, whatever gives the best opportunity for pupils and staff. I am, however, sceptical that the reality in educational terms may not live up to the dream as has so often been the case in the past. I cite the case of the Initial Teaching Alphabet introduced into schools in Luton in the 1980's, which was abandoned because of the disastrous effect it had on the children's ability to convert to the normal alphabet. The premise that what works elsewhere in the world will work well here is not always the case, if it were we could possibly have educational systems similar to those found in south east Asia and China whose children have had remarkable results in recent years but many would not want the disciplinarian system it would require.

I also feel strongly about the continued lack of communication to the residents of Cotton End and Shortstown who have not been properly consulted on how this proposal will affect existing parents and future residents who are in the main not aware of the impact of siting the school in Cotton End. I am also calling into question the desperate rush in which this proposal has been made, why must this project be rushed through so quickly? Why is it that your department which got things so wrong with Shortstown planning believes that this is going to be right this time. As it is possible to change the rules of admission to suit the potential school in Cotton End why cannot the same rules be applied to putting the potential numbers of new pupils elsewhere, allowing for a more considered approach to the siting of a new school which will meet the areas future educational requirements for Cotton End and Shortstown without it being a nuisance to their respective communities. In conclusion it is my opinion, which I stated in a Borough Council Meeting that this is a done deal that you and your team intend to push through irrespective of the views of many of the residents of Cotton End or Shortstown. I would strongly urge that you and the Borough Council take a step back and

rethink the project this time taking into account the valid views of the local population and the others who would undoubtedly be affected by your proposals.

Dear Mr Foster,

Further to my original response to the previous consultation (copied in below) sent to yourself and Consulting Bedford on 20th January 2017, I am writing again to express my objections over the proposal to expand/build a new school in Cotton End to provide education in particular for Shortstown/New Cardington as part of the current Statutory Consultation due to end on Monday 20th March 2017.

Since the original consultation I have identified additional concerns with the proposed expansion of Cotton End school, in particular that the development on Council owned land will breach Bedford Borough Council's own Settlement Policy Area (settlement boundary) for Cotton End as defined in the Council's own Local Plan, and The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan, a situation which would not be acceptable for any other development activity by either a developer or individual. I would like to remind you and the Borough Council that The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan provides the overall strategy for the development of the Borough until 2021 – some 4 years away.

As yet I have not seen anything which sets out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary? It is clearly against both your own Bedford Borough Council local planning policy and national policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

National policies in the National Planning Policy Framework state that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Local Plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise.

It would appear that you need to be reminded of your own planning policies contained within The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan, specifically Policy CP13 - The Countryside and Development within It:

All land outside Settlement Policy Areas is defined as countryside. Development in the countryside will only be permitted if it would be consistent with national policy, particularly that in PPS7: Planning and the Countryside.

*The following policy (CP13) will apply outside the SPA. It is a **restrictive policy** and applies in the Rural Policy Area and the Growth Area (Bedford, Kempston and the Northern Marston Vale). Examples of uses that are consistent with national policy in PPS7 are: justified agricultural or other occupational dwellings; leisure and tourism uses that need to be in the countryside; and, some horse-related activities.*

From an educational viewpoint I note that the latest Ofsted report for Cotton End Primary School states “*School leaders and governors think ahead. For example, in considering the expertise necessary to prepare for the move to larger premises, whilst setting the ambition of maintaining the ‘feel’ of a small school.*”

As an ex-Parent Governor at Cotton End Lower School and a professional consultant working for a FTSE100 business I am well aware that while an organisation can “think ahead”, that is the easy part - enacting that thought and strategic intent into a much larger environment will be a very significant challenge for the current head teacher. Transitioning from their current role in a small village school leading a small team of people to what is effectively a senior management role what will be one of the largest schools in Bedford Borough at the size being proposed, is likely to be very stressful for the current incumbent who will likely feel exposed, out of their depth and thrust into a role with huge responsibilities. I would like to understand what training, development and support systems your department will be offering the head teacher to support them so they can successfully address the numerous challenges of the role managing such a large school?

Also while the “*ambition of maintaining the ‘feel’ of a small school.*” is admirable, it will clearly be very difficult to achieve within the accelerated growth period and projected pupil numbers in such a short timeframe. It is highly likely that the school, without the correct level of leadership from day 1, will naturally morph into just another identikit poorly performing large primary school with no differentiating qualities whatsoever – this is just not what Eastcotts or indeed Bedford Borough needs - and if the new school fails educationally early in its life it will be a situation that will be very difficult to recover from - the reputation will be very difficult to shake off regardless how quickly the school might improve over time.

Lastly I must question the ongoing relationship between the Borough Council and the use of the preferred supplier, Kier Group and Lungfish (Scape Group). It is widely known within Cotton End and easily seen in publicly available council documents that Kier’s performance in carrying out the improvement work at the existing Cotton End school site was poor and they simply failed complete the work on time. What contractual penalty clauses will be imposed on Kier (or any other contractors/subcontractors used by Kier) to safeguard and reimburse local taxpayers if they fail to deliver this or any other new school on time? If Kier are unable to deliver small-scale projects as demonstrated by them previously, what contractual controls will Bedford Borough Council be putting in place to guarantee Kier Group deliver on time when building such a large new school?

I fail to comprehend why such work is not subject to standard competitive tender processes? Without any form of invitation to tender from other competitors to Kier, how can the Borough Council or the local electorate be certain they are getting the best solution for the lowest cost? The council leadership should recognise that they are leaving themselves open to significant criticism and scrutiny at the next council elections if public money is not seen to be providing maximum value to local taxpayers at a time when cutbacks and efficiencies are unavoidable by both national and local government.

Finally, I must question the use of the 'Lungfish Connect' system buildings. In the consultation seen so far the Borough Council has been far from open and transparent regarding the fact that these are just glorified temporary classrooms as already in use at the existing Cotton End Primary School site, and not the traditional school buildings people might expect for a significant £8million of capital expenditure. Given that the 3 Lungfish Connect buildings at the existing Cotton End Primary School were installed at a cost of c£800,000 it is difficult to imagine how a new school based around 8 Lungfish Connect buildings can cost almost 4 times more?

Based on the c£800,000 cost for 3 buildings gives a cost of c£266k per building or just £2.1m for 8 Lungfish Connect buildings – It is difficult to understand why you are budgeting and expecting to spend almost 4 times as much (£8m) to create the new school? Even taking account of other necessary activities to provide infrastructure to the new site and highway work to improve safety on the A600 between Shortstown and Cotton End, the whole project does not appear to provide good value for the local taxpayers at a time when public finances are under strain and funding is in short supply. Also, when compared to other recent new school building projects in the Borough, for example the 2 form entry Kempston Rural Lower School using system buildings from 2014 was projected to cost just £4.5m, half the cost of the proposed new school in Cotton End – are we seriously being asked to believe that building costs have doubled in the last 2 years? Similarly the new 2 form entry school for Shortstown cost a project £6.45m for a traditionally built school, which highlights the over inflated cost of the new school in Cotton End.

I trust the response I have given in this letter will be given full consideration within the consultation review.

Eastcotts Parish Council has considered the proposal to expand Cotton End Primary School at the monthly Parish Council meeting held on Monday 13th March 2017. Out of that meeting are the comments made in the visiting speakers agenda item and were not open for discussion as follows:

- There was concern from the Cotton End Residents Group to the proposal of the size of how large the new school would be.
- That the school would not be of benefit for Cotton End residents or the parents who would have to travel to the school from Shortstown

- The new school would result in an increase of traffic on the A600
- That more of Cotton End would be used as parking facilities three times a day, start of school, lunch time and end of school day using Hermitage Gardens; to the point of using the drives as a turning point, Wood Land, Trow Close and The High Road.
- That there would be an increase in traffic pollution and the risks to children
- That more houses being built in Shortstown would benefit from an expansion to Shortstown school
- That the Borough Council should re-think the logic
- The Cotton End Residents Group felt that a large expansion meant that they would lose the Village School feel.

The following comments came from agenda item 8 which was to agree a response on the statutory consultation of the proposal to expand and relocate Cotton End Primary School which was open to debate only by those Councillors who had no pecuniary interest in the item

- Can it be confirmed that no other housing development will be on the site of the proposed new school?
- Why there could not be expansion to the existing primary school in Shortstown
- Confirmation that although the school relocation is a breach of the Settlement Policy Area this would be treated as an exception not a precedent
- That steps would be taken to improve the safety of the A600 between Shortstown and Cotton End for pedestrians and cyclists
- Consideration of downgrading the A600 from an A class road to a B class road
- To commit to genuinely working with the developers to promote Cotton End School as a school for the whole of Eastcotts so new residents are not mistaken in the belief that Shortstown School is the only option