

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF BERRYFIELD INFANT AND ICKNIELD JUNIOR SCHOOLS, PRINCES RISBOROUGH

LEA RESPONSE TO MR PHILLIPS' LETTER OF OBJECTION 4 MARCH 2001

Mr Phillips has objected to the proposal for the re-organisation of Berryfield Infant and Icknield Junior schools, Princes Risborough on the following grounds:

It is a short sighted and ill advised decision because development plans for Princes Risborough will lead to a requirement for more school places not less.

The matter requires a more thorough airing and the public ought to be given the opportunity to debate the matter fully.

In the School Organisation Planning Area 11: Princes Risborough North, Wycombe District, there are no significant planned housing developments expected by 2005, however, 300 houses are proposed to be built at the Park Mill site, Princes Risborough from 2008 onwards. The yield of primary age children generated by such a development is expected to be in the order of 50 - 60.

The overall area appraisal shows a surplus capacity of 299 pupil places (which represents 15% of the total number of places), by April 2002 rising to 468 pupil places (24%) by April 2005.

In 2005 the projections contained within the School Organisation Plan show that 6 out of the 9 primary schools in the area will have a surplus capacity of over 25%. Of these schools, the following: Berryfield Infant, Great Kimble CE Infant, Icknield Junior, Monks Risborough CE Combined, are in the immediate Princes Risborough/Monks Risborough area. The next nearest school, Longwick CE Combined is projected to be full in September 2005.

It would appear, therefore, that there is little evidence currently to support Mr Phillips' assertion relating to the need for more school places.

There have been discussions with the governing bodies-of both schools on the possibility of an amalgamation over the course of the last two years. In the last year, there has been an intensive period of discussion and activity which has fully involved both governing bodies of the schools. The proposals that have been brought forward for the amalgamations have the full support of the governing bodies and the Local Education Authority.

There have been opportunities for parents, the public and the staff to be informed about the proposals as they have developed and to comment upon them. A meeting was held by both governing bodies of the schools for parents in the summer term 2000 which was attended by approximately 70 parents.

An initial phase of consultation with parents, staff and the community was held in November - December 2000 with there being two meetings for parents and a meeting for staff along with the wide distribution of a consultation document to parents, staff and other interested parties from the community.

Initially, the proposal to proceed on the initial consultation was agreed at the meeting of the Schools Sub-Committee on 19 September 2000.

Subsequently, the feedback from this initial consultation was reported to the Cabinet Member for Schools and the decision to proceed with the publication of statutory notices was made on 5 February 2001.

Statutory notices were published on 17 January 2001 and the formal objection period came to an end on 17 March 2001.

The established procedures for consultation on such proposals have been followed and the model adopted in Buckinghamshire of an initial informal phase of consultation followed by the formal statutory period of consultation has been adhered to. There have been opportunities for parents, staff and other interested members of the local community to attend meetings and to respond in writing to the consultation and decisions of the Local Education Authority have been taken within a framework where there is the opportunity for public comment as necessary.

Accordingly, the Authority's response to Mr Phillips' second point is that there have been opportunities for a thorough airing of the matter and parents, staff and the wider public have been given every opportunity to debate the matter fully and feedback from such consultation has been considered carefully before embarking upon the next stage of the process.