

STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

In respect of a Local Authority proposal: School and LA details

1. The name, address and category of the school for which the Local Authority are publishing the proposals:

Northfield School, Knights Road, Blackbird Leys, Oxford OX4 5DQ. This is a special school run by Oxfordshire County Council, which is the Local Authority.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

2. The date on which the proposals are planned to be implemented:

From 1 January 2015.

Objections and comments

3. A statement explaining the procedure for making representations:

Representations (responses) to the proposals can be made online using the feedback form at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation .

Alternatively any person may respond by email to diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk putting **Northfield School** in the subject line, or in writing to: Diane Cameron, School Organisation & Planning, County Hall, FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.

Representations must be received by midnight on 10 November 2014.

Alteration description**4.** A description of the proposed alteration

Oxfordshire County Council proposes to close the boarding accommodation facility known as the 'hostel' run by Northfield School for its pupils' benefit. The hostel is located at Sandy Lane West, Oxford.

Objectives**5.** The objectives of the proposals.

Use of Northfield School's hostel was suspended in April 2014 following the results of a Health and Safety survey. The issues identified were too serious to allow the hostel to remain open. The repairs and capital costs to make the building safe and fit for use are estimated to be approximately £1.5m.

The currently vacant building could be sold, and funds used to enhance facilities at the Northfield School site. The accommodation at Northfield School itself is in need of repair and improvement. If this proposal is agreed, some of the receipt from the sale of the hostel site would be used to improve the facilities at Northfield School, particularly the sports facilities. This would help the school develop extended school day activities on site and the facilities would be available to the community all year round.

As set out below in section 7, alternative provision and future plans are in place relating to the welfare of the pupils who were using the hostel.

Project costs**6.** Project costs and how these will be met:

There are no costs related to this proposal. The hostel is out of use and is providing no benefit, while sale of the asset would generate funds for Oxfordshire County Council.

7. Evidence of demand / support

In April 2014 the maximum number of children using the hostel was 9 per night. Overall 16 children were benefitting from the provision, with some spending four nights a week there and others staying for a couple of nights at a time.

To compensate for the closure of the hostel the school has been operating an extended day for 8 children per night until 8pm, 4 days a week, term time only. Due to the limited suitable facilities at the school, the children are generally taken off site to locations in Oxford. The children have been responding positively to the new extended day and most are managing well without the need for the residential facility.

Oxfordshire's Placement Strategy for children in and on the edge of care focuses on increasing Oxfordshire County Council's residential provision through the construction of four new 4-bed homes. The aim is to keep our riskiest and most vulnerable children closest to their local area. The new homes will provide support all year round rather than term time only and the homes will not be linked to one specific school. The new provision will be small homes rather than a single hostel. The homes will be able to support any of the most vulnerable children at Northfield to prevent them from being taken into care.

The hostel was assessed as a possible building to support the Placement Strategy, however the accommodation is not considered suitable.

During the earlier public consultation three responses were received. Two were in agreement with the proposal to close the hostel. One was made by a parent of a child at Northfield School who expressed support for the receipt of the sale of the site to be spent in improving the school facilities.

One response was from the Governing Body of Northfield School expressing concern over the future arrangements for pupils that would have used the hostel, and outlining the expense to the school already incurred in previous maintenance works to the hostel. The letter also recognised the fact that the hostel has been assessed as beyond economic repair, and the desire that receipts of its sale would be augmented by the county council and spent on maintenance of the school's buildings.