



Consultation on the proposal to close Northfield Hostel

1. Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing to close Northfield Hostel. It is not proposing to close Northfield School. The paragraphs below explain the reasons for proposing the closure of the residential hostel and what is being developed to increase the range of residential provision across Oxfordshire.

2. Northfield Hostel

Northfield Hostel is managed by Northfield Special School to provide Monday to Friday, term time only, residential provision for up to 12 of its students. Northfield School is a special school for secondary aged boys with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). The school serves children from across the whole county. The hostel is located adjacent to the A4142 (Eastern By-Pass Rd) and Sandy Lane West Road. If a decision is taken to close the Northfield Hostel it would, most likely, be sold.

3. Current situation

Use of Northfield 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.

In April 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.

4. New residential provision in Oxfordshire.

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.

5. Improved facilities at Northfield

The accommodation at Northfield School is in need of repair and improvement. If the proposal is agreed, some of the receipt from the closure and sale of the hostel 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.

6. Proposal

The Council is proposing to close Northfield Hostel permanently. The key reasons are:

- The high costs for repair.
- The current model of provision is only 4 nights per week, term time only.
- The Placement Strategy will be increasing residential provision through the development of 4 new homes.
- The success of the extended school day model while the hostel has been closed
- The opportunity to enhance facilities at the Northfield School site.

Oxfordshire County Council is formally proposing to close Northfield Hostel and is seeking your views on this.

How to respond

Please respond by email to diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk and put NORTHFIELD HOSTEL in the subject line of your email.

Alternatively, write to Diane Cameron, School Organisation & Planning, County Hall, FREEPOST Oxfordshire County Council.

ALL RESPONSES TO BE RECEIVED BY 8 OCTOBER 2014.