

Annex 1

The ACE Centre Nursery Proposed Closure

Consultation Responses

The County Council ran an informal 'pre-publication' consultation to consider views on the proposed closure of the nursery.

25 responses were received as part of this consultation. The county council, nursery school leadership and governing body considered the issues raised in that consultation in developing the proposal.

The issues raised during the pre-publication consultation and the county council's response to these are summarised below:

Of the 25 responses received, 24 strongly opposed the closure proposal, citing concerns about the loss of the quality of provision and staff expertise, the unique outdoor learning offer, the school's value to the community, capacity and access to alternative provision, and the communication and process followed.

One response was partially supportive, requesting assurance regarding replacement provision and clarity on the future use of the site.

The table below shows how the objections received in the pre-publication consultation have been addressed in the Full Statutory Proposal:

Objection Theme	How Addressed in Statutory Proposal
Concerns about practical access, transport, and convenience of alternative settings.	The proposal states that "replacement provision will be... more accessible and more convenient for local parents," and that a range of settings (including those with wraparound care and full-time options) are available, offering parental choice and convenience.
Concerns about whether other local settings can absorb displaced children and maintain quality.	The proposal provides detailed data on local capacity, stating there are "surplus 41 places for 2-year-olds and surplus 116 places for 3-year-olds" in the area, and that "vacancy data indicates immediate availability of places in Chipping Norton." It also notes that several providers can expand if needed, ensuring sufficient capacity for all children.
ACE is seen as a vital community	The proposal discusses the impact on the

<p>hub, supporting families beyond education.</p>	<p>community, stating that “impact on the community is expected to be minimal as most families have already identified suitable alternative provision.” It also notes that early years settings are skilled at supporting new children and families, and that the council has considered statutory guidance on minimising community impact.</p>
<p>Concerns about loss of high-quality education, staff expertise, and unique learning environment.</p>	<p>The proposal explicitly states that “replacement provision will be at least equal in quantity and quality, with no loss of expertise or specialism” and that alternative settings offer “good standards as evidenced by Ofsted inspection.” The council commits to ensuring that displaced children can access provision of comparable quality, and that staff expertise is not lost to the community.</p>
<p>Loss of unique outdoor/forest-school opportunities.</p>	<p>While the proposal does not specifically reference outdoor space, it reiterates the requirement for “replacement provision [to] be at least equal in quantity and quality.” This implies that distinctive features, such as outdoor learning environments, must be considered when assessing the adequacy of alternatives.</p>
<p>Perceived lack of transparency and predetermined outcome.</p>	<p>The statutory proposal outlines a clear, staged process for decision-making, including opportunities for formal representation and objection. It provides multiple channels for submitting views and objections, and details the timeline for decision-making, which will be made in a public meeting. This is intended to ensure transparency and genuine stakeholder input.</p>

Full Statutory Consultation

The Full Statutory Consultation was held for a period of four weeks from 12th January – 9th February 2026.

Four responses were received to the consultation. All respondents indicated a strong objection to the closure of the nursery. Reasons cited were the impact on families and the community, concerns about a shortage of childcare and the communication and process followed.

The statutory proposal directly addresses the childcare shortage objection by providing data on surplus places and asserting that alternative provision is available and sufficient, providing demographics and financial data and clearly outlines the statutory process followed.