

# **The Future of Shelton Lower School**

Consultation results

By  
Knowledge & Insight

## Purpose of consultation

Shelton Lower School is a small rural lower school in the village of Upper Shelton. The school has an overall pupil capacity of 75 pupils but has not been full for a number of years and unfortunately this decline is forecast to continue. Only four children's parents have requested a place in the September intake out of a total admission number of 15. Shelton Lower School has, this year, gone into a budget deficit position and this looks set to worsen.

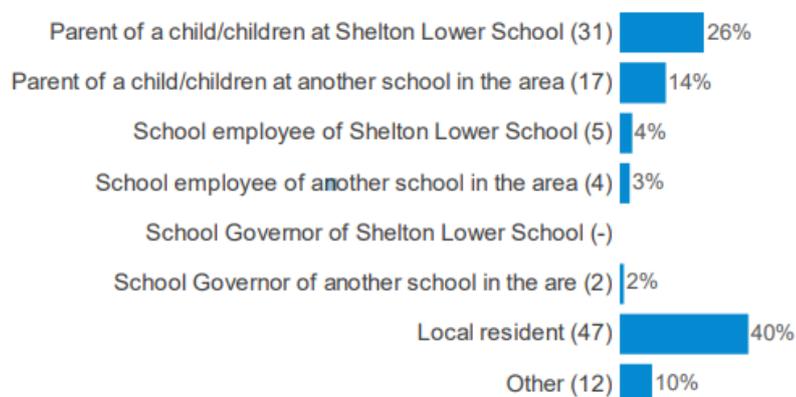
The governors alerted the council to the deteriorating financial situation in February 2018. The council has been providing financial support to the school and exploring possible options. At present there seems to be no prospect of recovery and therefore the future of the school must be considered.

The council has to follow statutory guidance if consideration is being given in relation to the possible closure of a school. The consultation on the future of the school is the first step in the process. Parents, local residents and stakeholders were invited to give their views on the future options for the school.

## Feedback on proposal

A total of 118 responses were received. The greatest number of responses, 47, were from local residents (40%). This was followed by 31 responses from parents with children at the school (26%). A small number of responses, 4, came from parents whose children would be joining the school (3%).

### Are you a: (Please tick one)



**If other, please specify:**

Parent of child applying to start in September 2018 and another child September 2019

I have my child in the robin nursery

I used to live in the area

Worked at the school many years ago as a nursery nurse. The school was the best I had ever worked at

Central Bedfordshire Resident

Ratepayer

Parent of child due to start school next year

Parent of 2 children who attended Shelton Lower School

Resident of next village

local resident with a young child who would be joining the school

ex-pupil

Parent of former pupils

**If you are the parent of a child/children at another school or the employee or governor of another school, please specify:**

Church End Lower School

Forest End (Church End)

Cranfield and wootton

Marston Vale Middle

Church end

Marston Vale middle

Church end

Southill

Wootton Upper School

Church end lower

Church End

Wootton Lower

Church end lower

Southill lower school

Southill

Parent of a child at another school but looking to transfer my son to Shelton in September.

Employee at Church End Lower School

I have a son at Wootton Lower school

Wootton lower

None of these

School in Leicester

Pippins and Bramleys

Thomas Johnson Lower school, Lidlington

Church End

pupil at Marston Vale Middle

St Marys C of E, Clophill

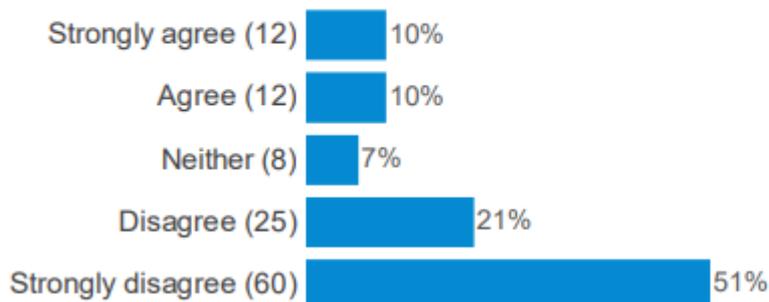
N/A

No

Wootton Lower

I am the parent of a pupil currently in year 1

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current situation at Shelton Lower School is increasingly unviable?**



The majority of respondents 85 (72%) disagreed that Shelton Lower school was becoming increasingly unviable.

**Do you have any suggestions or alternative solutions to closing Shelton Lower School?**

Theme	No of comments
Don't shut yet - building in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) will increase numbers*	22
Promote it more	13
Consultation contains inaccurate information	11
Multi academy trust / merger / partnership with other schools	9
Invest to make it viable / fund it properly	8
Other schools too large (taking pupils away)	5
Change age range to include years 5&6	4
Change catchment areas of local schools	3
Get developers to fund existing schools, not just new ones	1
Other	27
<b>Total comments</b>	<b>83</b>

35 respondents did not leave a comment.

\* It should be noted that that some of the comments refer to development in Wootton, such as Berry Wood which is in another local authority area.

**Comments included:**

*Given the new housing developments planned for the immediate area local to Upper Shelton, Berry woods for one example, the school should be promoted, and reinvested in by the new housing developers.*

*Keep the school open and advertise it to residents I. Marston Moretaine. My son is in reception at church end and I was not aware of Shelton when I was choosing his school. If people don't know it is there they won't use it.*

*My understanding is that the numbers and finances have been wrongly calculated and the school's financial situation is far less serious than was projected.*

*It would appear that mistakes have been made leading to the original deficit figure being incorrect. This has led to some parents worrying that they will not find a suitable local alternative for their child and moving them already, before any decision has been made about closure. The school is now in a worse position due to these mistakes being shown at the original parents meeting.*

*Has the council considered a partnership arrangement with local schools? Has the council considered whether changing from a lower school to a R to 6 school could help to restore growth?*

*I believe that capital funding should be given to the school to make it more viable, as I believe this is the case, and that the school has not received any capital funding to invest in the school to make it more attractive to potential parents.*

### **Do you have any other comments regarding the future of Shelton Lower School?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>No of comments</b>
Don't close it	28
Shelton will be needed with the planned expansion locally	27
School is part of the community	18
It's a good / lovely school which supports pupils	17
Impact on current pupils / parents	9
Inaccurate information in report	9
Increase in commuting	7
School should close if not economically viable	5
Work with other schools / Multi Academy Trust	2
Other	16
<b>Total comments</b>	<b>87</b>

31 respondents did not leave a comment.

#### **Comments included:**

*Pupil numbers are going to increase given all the new building going on in the vicinity. With a short sighted intention, a much bigger problem is created. I am aware that councils now get the builders to build the schools as part of their planning conditions on the new estates, but surely it does not relinquish them from the responsibilities of their existing schools.*

*It would seem logical to me that the school remain open and a decision not be looked at until the surrounding areas development plans and schedules are finalised.*

*I think it will take away a part of the Shelton community. We were cut off from the main village by the bypass leaving us with no easy access to shops etc. and now the school may be taken away as well. With all the new developments locally surely given time the numbers of*

*pupils in the other local schools will increase and Shelton would be relevant to take the overflow*

*This small rural school accommodates children from families at Cranfield University, where English is not their first language, and children with disabilities as it is a small school who can accommodate individual needs. The closure of this school would be utterly detrimental to the children and the local community. This school is loved - listen to us before disregarding our recommendations and ideas.*

*This could be ideal for children who require small classroom sizes due to additional needs.*

*Both of my children are thriving here, the nursery has helped my son in so many ways - he struggles with his speech and confidence, since going to Shelton that has improved, more than you'll ever know. My daughter has come on leaps and bounds since starting reception here.*

*It would be a shame if the school has to close. It was a good school when my children were there and from what I hear it still is. Children tend to learn better in smaller classes where they can have individual attention when needed. But I understand the need for it to be financially viable.*

*I live across the road from Shelton Lower School, my son is 2 years old and I was planning on him starting at Shelton School in September 2020. It will take me less than 1 minute to walk him to our lovely village school, if you close it we will be in the car for 10-20 minutes driving to another school.*

*If the school is not economically viable then it should close. These children and the funding they attract would be better served in schools that are attracting students. Money should not be frittered away trying to save a school which only attracts a small proportion of children, many of which don't even live in Lower Shelton. In my view the benefits of closing out weight any benefits from keeping it open*

## About you

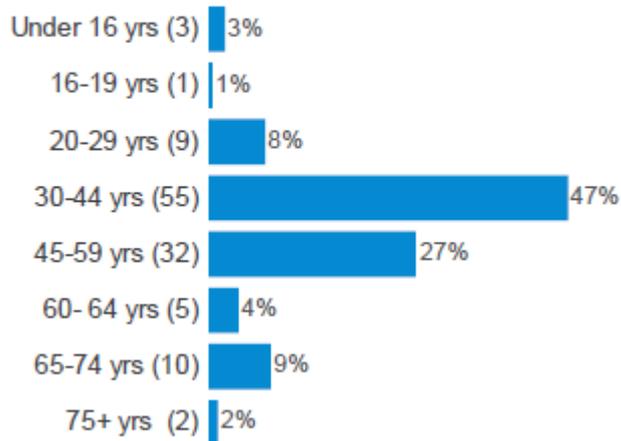


### Do you consider yourself disabled?

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.



### What is your age?



### To which of these groups do you consider you belong?



### If other, please specify:

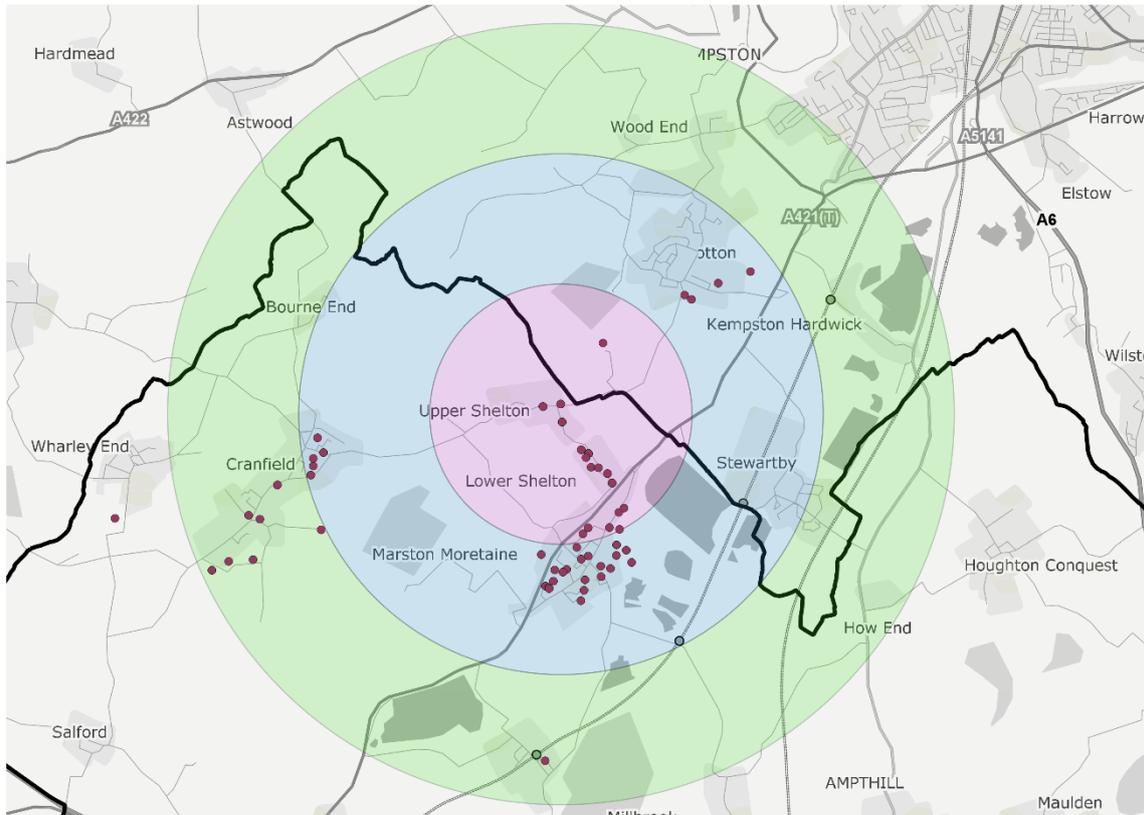
White European  
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### Postcode analysis

A review of postcodes indicates that the majority of respondents were from the local area around Shelton, ensuring those most affected by the proposal were able to have their say.

Location of respondent	Respondents
<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	<b>98</b>
Cranfield and Marston Moretaine ward	86
Other Central Bedfordshire wards	12
<b>Bedford and Luton</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Unidentifiable</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>118</b>

This is confirmed by the map below, which shows that most of the respondents to the consultation lived within two miles of Shelton Lower School.

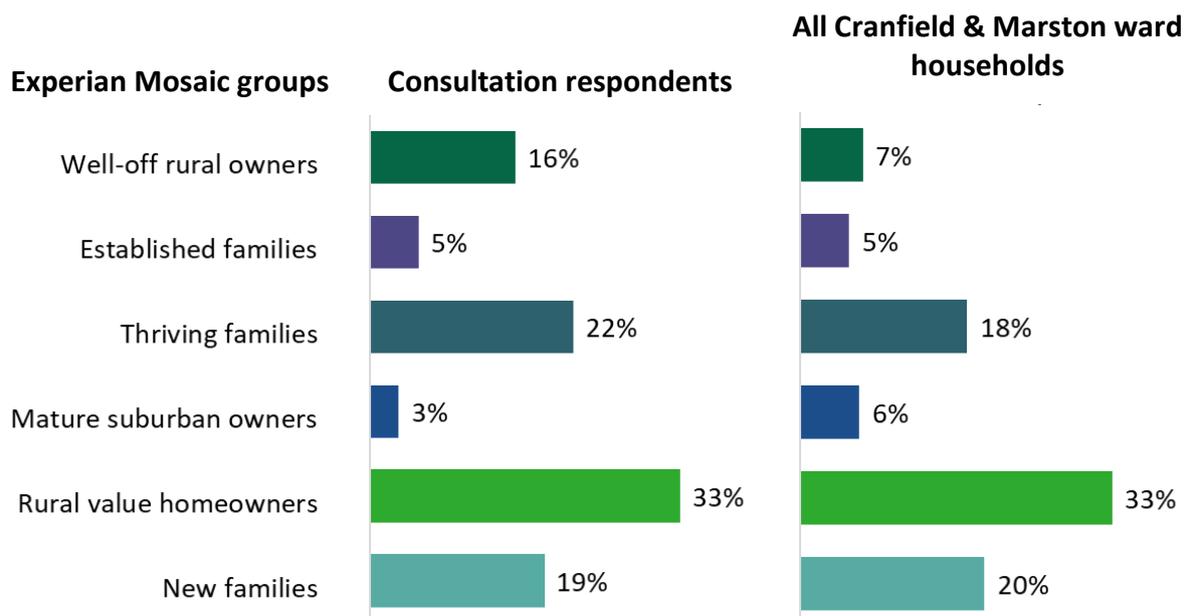


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Each coloured circle on the map represents a distance of 1 mile from the school. The thick black line is the Central Bedfordshire Council area boundary. Note that there were also respondents from outside the area shown on the map.

- 49 respondents (42%) lived within 1 mile of the school
- 31 respondents (26%) lived within 1-2 miles of the school
- 10 respondents (8%) lived within 2-3 miles of the school
- 16 respondents (14%) lived more than 3 miles from the school
- 12 respondents (10%) did not give a full postcode.

In addition to the location of respondents, we also looked at the profile of respondents. This showed that the profile of respondents was similar to the profile of residents within Cranfield and Marston ward, and included people from less well off rural households, as well as more affluent families.



Note 1: the chart for consultation respondents only shows those responses that had a full valid postcode. This includes 80% of all respondent to the consultation. Most of those not included did not give a full valid postcode.

Note 2: the chart for all Cranfield & Marston ward households only displays those groups that also had respondents to the consultation. As a result, some of the smaller groups within Cranfield and Marston ward are not shown. However, the groups shown in the chart account for 93% of all households within the ward.

The largest group of respondents was 'Rural value households'. These are less well off rural households, and they are the biggest group within the ward as a whole. They are therefore reflective of the local community. Many of the responses also came from affluent families and from 'New families', who are young families in new build housing.

## Conclusions

The majority of the 118 respondents were from the local area. The profile of respondents was similar to the profile of residents within Cranfield and Marston ward, including people from less well-off rural households, as well as more affluent families.

The greatest number of responses, 47, were from local residents (40%), followed by 31 responses from parents with children at the school (26%).

The majority of respondents, 85, (72%) disagreed that Shelton Lower School is becoming unviable.

Respondents suggested alternative solutions such as waiting for development in the local area (Marston, Cranfield, Wootton) to increase pupil numbers, improving promotion of the school, exploring possibilities for partnership with other schools and securing further investment to increase viability.

Other comments highlighted the potential impact on the local community in terms of the loss of a valuable community asset, the positive contribution the school makes in supporting children with additional needs and the likely increase in driving children to school.

A few comments highlighted that the school should close if it was not economically viable.



**Central  
Bedfordshire**

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

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