

Statutory Consultation on the Closure of Wirksworth Infant School

There are two infant schools in Wirksworth – Wirksworth Infant School and Wirksworth CE Infant School which are 0.2 miles apart. The two schools are federated under one full-time headteacher and they have a joint governing body. Although federations are recognised as a way of enabling smaller schools to work more formally in partnerships to share costs, this has not addressed the financial challenges faced by the federation which has experienced difficulties in balancing its budget and despite rationalisation of the staff and other cuts, there are very few options left to achieve an acceptable budget.

The Buildings

Both schools are in buildings dating back to pre-1919. Wirksworth Church of England Infant School had a project to replace a temporary building with a new purpose built EYFS classroom/outdoor play space and office extension in 2015, but still have one classroom in a modular building. The sites of both schools are well below the recommended Department of Education Building Bulletin 103 site areas (BB103) with Wirksworth Church of England School measuring 2213m² and Wirksworth Infant 989m².

Each school currently has a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 20 and net capacity of 60, giving a total of 120 places across the two schools.

The teaching space at Wirksworth C E Infant School comprises of 3 classrooms and a small hall. The School capacity was previously set at 87 by utilising half of the hall as a classroom.

The teaching space at Wirksworth Infant School comprises of 2 classrooms, a small hall and a group/general teaching space. The School capacity was previously set at 90 with the general teaching/group space used as a third classroom. There are significant level changes in the school and it does not lend itself to full accessibility. The accommodation at both schools is below that recommended in BB103 and both have shortfalls in teaching and support space. There is no scope for expansion on either site and an increase in the capacity of either school could only be achieved by reverting back to the previous room uses as described above.

Projections

The projections for the two schools are shown below.

	Actual	Projected			
	2021/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Wirksworth CE Inf	47	45	49	46	45

Wirksworth Inf	31	35	36	35	34
	78	80	85	81	79

The projections however do not include the pupils likely to come from the housing growth.

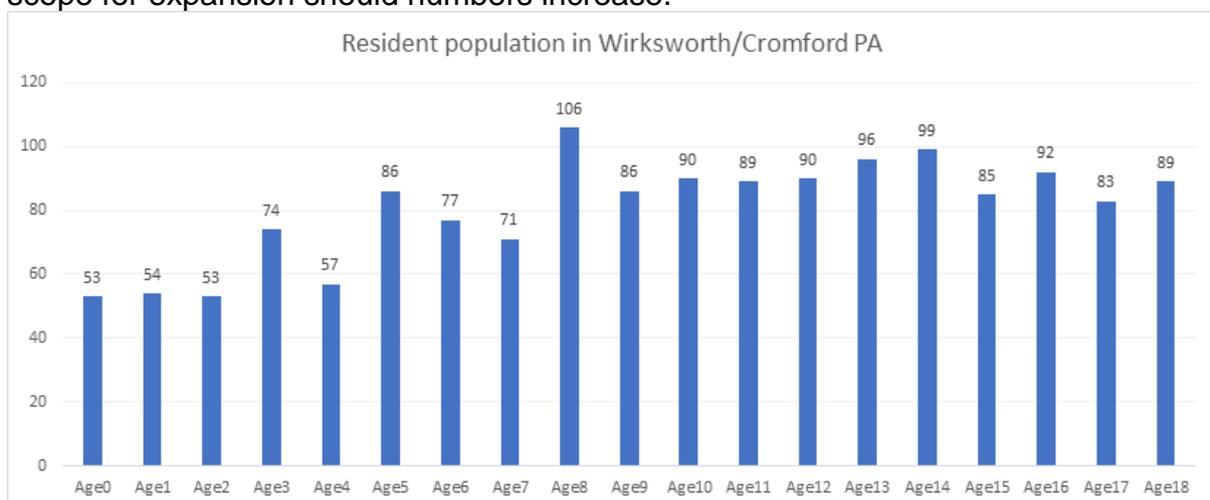
The strategic housing growth in Wirksworth as identified in the Local Plan is shown in the table below:

Site Name	Size	No of houses	Planning Status	Infant yield
Land off Middleton Road/Cromford Road, Wirksworth (18/00741/OUT)	9.46 ha	151	Pending	13
Land at Middle Peak Quarry, Wirksworth	62 ha	645	Not yet submitted	55
Number of allocated dwellings		771		68

The Wirksworth notified site was located in the land off Middleton Road however it has now been moved to the Middle Peak Quarry site and there is provision for a new school to serve that development and possibly the whole of the town. The timing of that new school is however uncertain and is unlikely to be delivered before children start to be accommodated in the new houses. The site off Middleton Road is progressing and the existing schools will have to accommodate the pupils from that development. The additional 13 pupils and some of the 55 could therefore have to be accommodated in the existing school(s).

Places Planning

The schools sit within the Wirksworth/Cromford Planning Area. Whilst there is some surplus projected for the next 5 years in Wirksworth, there is limited space capacity at other schools within the planning area which are small rural schools by nature and are likely to offer little scope for expansion should numbers increase.



Please note that this is current population and does not include those likely to move to new housing.

Admissions

Should Wirksworth Infant School close on 31 August 2023 it is proposed that, for admissions purposes, parents and carers of children at Wirksworth Infant School would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. We would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would be made in line with the admissions policy as set out in the school admissions booklet which is available on the Derbyshire County Council website at <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places/apply-for-a-school-place.aspx>

For information about which schools have spare places and whether your child/ren would qualify for free home to school transport please contact the admissions team on 01629 533190 or admissions.transport@derbyshire.gov.uk

Impact on the Community

Consideration has been given into the impact on the community if Wirksworth Infant School were to close. Given the close proximity of Wirksworth C of E Infant School there is no negative impact as there will still be well regarded infant provision within the community.

Implementation

There is a defined statutory process in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 which must be followed before making a decision on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education. There are five stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

Consultation The publication of this consultation document marks a period of consultation during which the views of interested parties are sought and which will be considered by the local authority.

Publication Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, the local authority will decide whether or not to publish statutory notices regarding the proposed closure.

Representation The representation period starts on the date of publication of the statutory notice and must last for a period of four weeks. During this

period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the local authority, to be taken into account before a final decision is taken.

Decision Within two months of the end of the representation period the local authority must make a decision on the proposal.

Implementation If the proposal is approved, Wirksworth Infant School would close on 31 August 2023.

Rural schools and the presumption against closure

The local authority acknowledges that there is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. There are a number of factors set out in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that must be taken into account when proposing to close a rural primary school; the local authority has had regard to these and will continue to take them into account during the consultation process.

The consultation on this proposal will be from 5th September 2022 to 30th September 2022

The consultation document is available on the Derbyshire County Council website at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/council/have-your-say or by request from Jenny Webster on Tel: 01629 535808 or by e-mail to jenny.webster@derbyshire.gov.uk

Within four weeks of the publication of this notice, any person may object to or comment on the proposal by writing to the address or by sending an e-mail to the contact details below.

Jenny Webster, Development Manager, Derbyshire County Council, North Block, County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG or jenny.webster@derbyshire.gov.uk

The deadline for receiving responses is Friday 30th September 2022.



Carol Cammiss
Executive Director – Children’s Services