

# Primary School Places Review

## Options for South Birkenhead



# CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

March 2005

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## OPTIONS FOR SOUTH BIRKENHEAD

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# Introduction

The Council is rightly proud of education in Wirral. Teachers, governors, parents and pupils all play a part in making schools successful. The Council must make sure money spent on education is used in the best possible way. This means spending money on real children, not on empty places.

The Council has to review its school places to make sure that across Wirral, empty or surplus places stay below 10%. It also has to consider what action to take when a school has 25% or more surplus places.

It is right that there should be some surplus places for parental choice. However, in Wirral the number of primary age children is falling. This means that some schools are getting smaller, producing a significant number of empty places.

Also, each school needs enough pupils to pay its costs in full. When pupil numbers become too low, the school is at risk of financial problems, and may have to cut back spending on staff and other resources. Even if the school avoids going into debt, each teacher in a small school has a more demanding and stressful workload than a teacher in a larger school.

It is important to remember that any savings that may be made as a result of any of these options would be re-invested in the remaining schools. This means increased funding for real children, rather than supporting empty space.

Where high surplus has developed and numbers continue to fall, we must take action, and make changes. This consultation is for you to help decide what changes should be made to reduce surplus places at schools in this area.

## Why is the Review necessary?

The number of primary age children in Wirral is reducing because of the falling birth rate. It is clear that new families coming to live in Wirral and new housing developments will make little difference. This is supported by discussion with colleagues involved with the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in the North Birkenhead and Beechwood areas.

Currently there are around 10% surplus places in primary schools across Wirral. These empty places are not spread evenly, but are concentrated within some areas and in some schools. The overall primary roll in Wirral has fallen for a number of years and is predicted to fall further from 25,412 in 2005 to 23,462 by 2010, which would result in around 18% surplus places across Wirral if no action is taken. The birth rate trend indicates that the surplus will continue to grow for some time.

## Smaller schools versus larger schools

The LEA and school representatives spent a year discussing the relationship between number of pupils on roll and quality of education. It was agreed that in order for a single form of entry school (one class per year) to be viable and efficient, the number of pupils on roll should be within the range of 120 and 210. Account also needs to be taken of local factors: a small remote rural school may serve a very wide area, for example.

Where school rolls are falling, small schools face the following problems:

- They have to spend more and more of their budget to pay staff and the fixed costs of running the school, like cleaning and rates. Small schools spend more than 90% of their budget on staffing, leaving far less for equipment, books, additional support assistants and so on.
- The LEA can re-direct money from other schools to protect the small school for a while. This means that other schools have less money to spend on their own pupils. If pupil numbers keep falling, small schools could go into debt.
- With a smaller group of teachers, each teacher has to take on additional responsibilities to cover all the subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as issues such as Special Educational Needs and assessment. This increases the workload on teachers.
- Small schools can be successful – but this success relies on a small number of teachers. When teachers move to another school or retire, this change can have a significant effect on the quality of the school.

Larger schools:

- have more flexibility in their budget. Because they spend less in percentage terms on staff and fixed costs, larger schools have more money to spend on resources such as equipment, books, and additional support staff to meet children's needs.
- Additional responsibilities need to be covered in a large school just as in a small school, but they can be shared between a larger group of teachers. This gives teachers a more reasonable workload. Teachers then have more time to plan, and develop their skills.
- A larger pool of staff means the school can offer a broad range of resources and skills across subjects and key stages, including well-resourced pastoral care to create a caring ethos.
- They provide more opportunities for staff development enabling them to develop and 'grow'. This helps explain why large stable schools can cope better with staff turnover.

## **The case for a reduction in school places in South Birkenhead**

The current capacity of all schools in this area is 1,852. The current number of children in those schools is 1,515. There are 337 surplus places. That represents 18% surplus places or around 11 empty 30 place school classes across primary ages 4 -11. Our target is to manage surplus places at below 10%.

Over the next 5 years, the numbers of pupils entering South Birkenhead schools will continue at a lower rate than was the case in the past. This simply reflects the fall in birth and other trends relating to the local population, including the current choices being made by local families. The net impact will be that larger group sizes will leave primary schools and be replaced with smaller numbers of pupils joining schools. It is projected that the total school population will fall by 2010 from its present total of 1,515 to 1,410 pupils.

If no action were to be taken to address this trend, the number of surplus places would rise to 442, increasing the percentage of surplus places to 24%, more than double our 10% or less goal. This would represent almost 15 empty 30 place classes, equivalent to two single form of entry primary schools.

## Questions to be asked of all Options

In considering options for this area, there are many factors to bear in mind. Here are some suggestions.

### Demographics

- Population predictions for 2010: how many children will there be?
- Surplus place percentage at the local level predicted for 2010: is this within the recommended 5 to 10%?

### Pattern of choice

- Current parental preferences: where do the children live, and where do they go to school now?
- Pupil mobility: do children move school during their primary education?
- Allocation of school zones: do schools have an appropriate zone?
- Are there enough places for all parents who want a Denominational education for their child? There are two kinds of church school. "Aided" schools are the property of trustees, and their admission arrangements are the responsibility of their Governing bodies. "Controlled" schools have a religious ethos, but are owned by the LEA. The LEA controls their admission arrangements.

### Traffic and housing

- Traffic implications: how will children travel to school?
- Housing Market Renewal Initiative: has the option taken into account the HMRI consultation process?
- How many schools are there within a 2 mile radius? The LEA must provide transport for under 8s if there is no school within two miles of their home. For 8's and older, this distance is 3 miles.

### Building and site

- Will internal changes be required to return classrooms into use?
- Alternative uses of the buildings and site: would it be practical or cost-effective to re-use the building for another purpose?
- Effect on other users of the building: what happens to existing preschools, nurture groups and so on?
- Is any new building work required?
- Is the building suitable for use as an extended school?

### School organisation

- How is it likely to affect class sizes overall?
- Can infant class sizes be maintained under the statutory limit of 30 pupils without unacceptable impact on other classes or budget requirements?
- What are the implications for staff? Are there opportunities for redeployment or early retirement?
- Will changes in admission number be required? This is the number of children that a school can take in Reception each year.
- What effect might there be on Early Years education, childcare or Nurture groups?

- Has special educational needs provision been taken into account?

#### Financial

- What will happen to any financial savings made?
- What capital expenditure is needed? For example, for new buildings or refurbishment of existing buildings, purchase of sites.
- If a school closes, what will happen to the site? Can it be sold or leased?
- Where will the money received from site sales or leases go?

#### Standards

- What are the standards of education like?
- Will children's education be enhanced?

### **Definition of terms**

Closure means ceasing to maintain a school.

Amalgamating or merging two schools involves closing both schools, then opening a single school with one budget, governing body and headteacher.

Federation can only be proposed by governing bodies. Federated schools keep their separate budgets, but have one governing body, and often a single headteacher.

Extended schools provide a range of activities and services for their communities, such as adult education, childcare or ICT facilities, often outside school hours.

# The Options

Currently, there are 18% surplus places in South Birkenhead. This is projected to rise to 24% by 2010 if no action is taken. We propose reducing surplus capacity in this area. There are several ways this could be done, and we are consulting you about the following options.

**Option A:** Closure of The Dell Primary

**Option B:** Closure of The Dell Primary

AND

Closure of Well Lane Primary

**Option C:** Closure of The Dell Primary

AND

Closure of Well Lane Primary

AND

Building a new school at a site South of Bedford Road

In Appendix C of the Cabinet report of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2005, pupil numbers are those from the Annual Pupil Census in January 2004 unless stated otherwise.

The pupil numbers from the Annual Pupil Census of January 2005 have now been released. **Pupil numbers in the Options section of this document are from January 2005 unless stated otherwise.**

## **Option A. Closure of The Dell Primary**

It is proposed to cease to maintain The Dell Primary School at the end of Summer Term 2006. There are two main reasons for this decision:

- to remove surplus places;
- to provide a more cost-effective education.

### **Consideration of Factors**

The Dell is a primary school of 132 pupils serving the southern part of Rock Ferry.

The proposal to close the school is based on considerable spare capacity at the school with little likelihood of the situation being significantly reversed.

The Dell Primary has surplus places of 29% (54 places), the second highest percentage of any school in the South Birkenhead small planning area (Highest was Well Lane at 37%, 106 places). This is predicted to rise to 33% (62 places) by 2010.

If the school is closed, all pupils currently and projected to attend the school could be accommodated within existing accommodation at local schools. No new build classrooms or changes to existing classroom uses would be required at the receiving schools.

Improvements would be made in order to ensure that accommodation at the schools to which the pupils transfer is of a high standard, taking into account the potential for extended schools.

The schools existing zone would be reallocated to neighbouring schools. Example map A is attached showing how this could be accomplished.

This option would remove 243 surplus places.

This option will reduce projected surplus capacity in the South Birkenhead area in 2010 from 24% to 16%. It is also likely to reduce surplus capacity in the Bebington area in 2010 from 11% to 8%.

### **Finance**

The LEA must provide education in a cost-effective manner. This school is relatively expensive to maintain, in large measure because it has such a surplus of places. Expressed as total expenditure per pupil, in 2003/2004:

- The Dell Primary School spent £5,324 per pupil

This is the highest expenditure per pupil of any Wirral primary school. The average for Wirral primary schools in this period was £2,737 per pupil.

Closure of the school would result in some revenue savings in the education budget which would be recycled through the Budget Formula to increased funding for pupils at Wirral schools.

The Council would determine the future of The Dell site.

## **Effect on Standards**

The following paragraphs are OFSTED judgements on average points from the 2004 PANDA. Judgements are based on comparing average pupil performance over the last 3 years with National median pupil performance over the last 3 years.

### *The Dell Primary*

- At Key Stage 1, the performance of pupils in Reading was close to the National median. In Mathematics, their performance was below the National median, and in Writing it was well below the National Median.
- At Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English was very low in comparison to the National median. Their performance in Mathematics and Science is well below the National median.

### *Special Educational Needs*

The following paragraph is the OFSTED judgement from the 2004 PANDA.

### *The Dell Primary*

The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (38.7%) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (2.6%) is above the national average.

The particular needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, will continue to be met in any school to which they are transferred.

## **Parental choice**

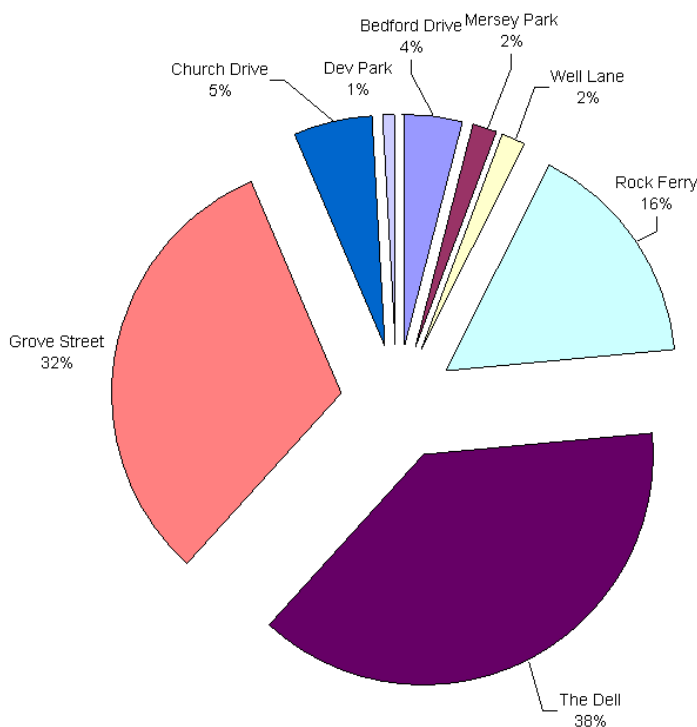
### *Catchment zone analysis (including Nursery pupils)*

Excluding Catholic provision, around 62% of pupils (192 pupils) who live in The Dell's zone do not attend the zone school, the highest migration to alternative schools from any community school in South Birkenhead.

Almost as many pupils from the Dell's zone attend Grove Street Primary (32%, 99 pupils), as The Dell itself (38%, 119 pupils). Rock Ferry Primary receives 16% of pupils from The Dell zone (50 pupils).

**The Dell Catchment zone  
-Actual Community School attended**

Total Community pupils in catchment = 311



**Number of pupils by school**

The Dell	119
Grove Street	99
Rock Ferry	50
Church Drive	17
Bedford Drive	13
Mersey Park	5
Well Lane	5
Devonshire Park	3

*Pupil mobility*

This is a measure of pupil movement between local primary schools after initial registration. Local means the South Birkenhead small planning area. We looked at where pupils were first registered, either in January 2000 or at first registration in Reception, and compared this to where pupils were registered in January 2004. As would be expected, all schools showed pupil mobility within the local area.

For example, if 10 pupils left, and 20 pupils arrived, this would be a net gain of 10 pupils. If 20 pupils left and 10 pupils arrived, this would be a net loss of 10 pupils. For a school with a total of 200 first registered pupils, a net loss of 10 pupils is equivalent to 5% net loss.

In this period The Dell Primary had a net loss of pupils to alternative local schools (6%, 11 pupils). Only Well Lane Primary had a higher net loss (12%, 36 pupils). All other schools in this area had a local net gain during this period.

If Grove Street Primary is included alongside the South Birkenhead schools, the net loss at The Dell Primary climbs to 11% (20 pupils).

Closure of The Dell Primary would have implications for class sizes at other schools, principally Grove Street Primary and Rock Ferry Primary. In the event of closure, pupils would undoubtedly transfer to one of several local schools.

**Community cohesion**

The Dell has a Breakfast and Afterschool club, a Nurture room and a SureStart room. A Behavioural Improvement Programme (BIP) BEST team was recently located within the school.

The SureStart unit, Nurture group and BIP BEST team will need to be relocated at appropriate school sites within the area. Some of these facilities could, for example, be relocated to Well Lane Primary, which would have the effect of reducing surplus places at this site.

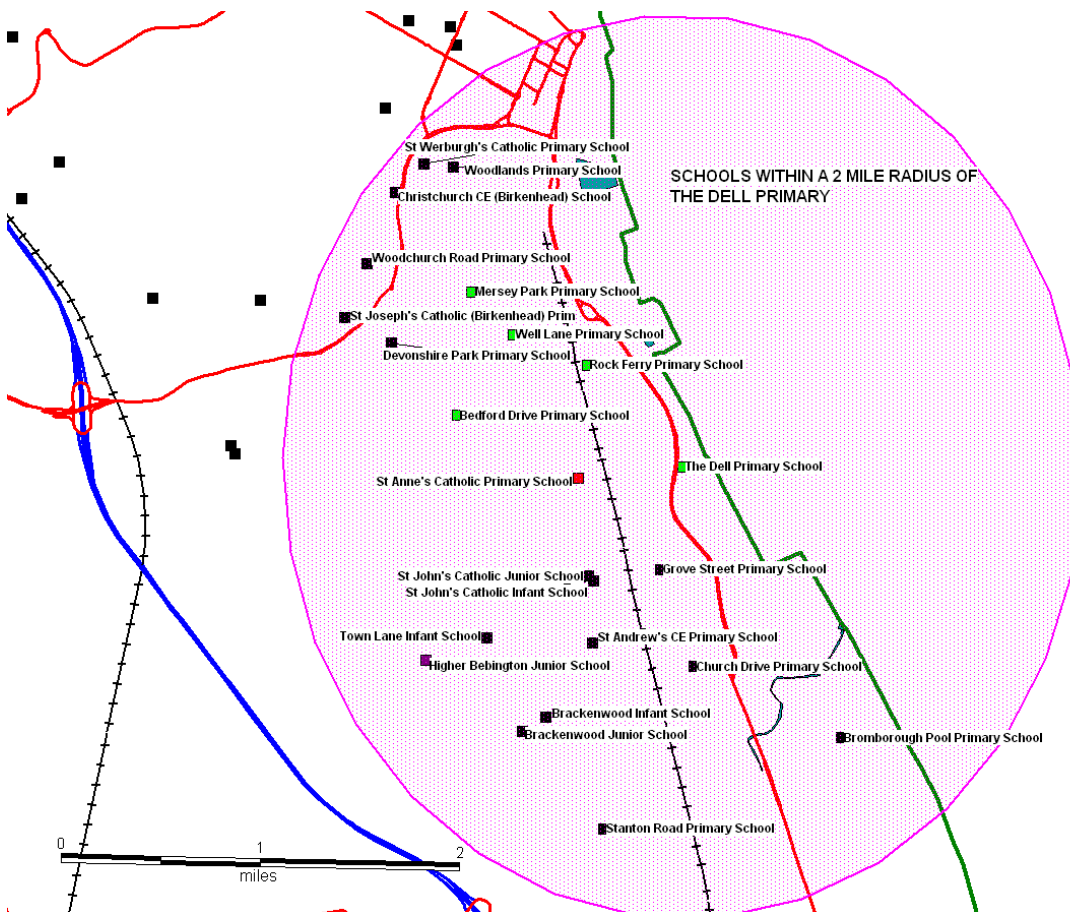
The Dell has an LEA designated Nursery class, which in January 2005 had 18 pupils.

### Travel and traffic

Inevitably, the closure of a local school means that some parents and pupils, though not all, will have to travel further to the next nearest alternative. However, additional journeys are not likely to be too great and a significant proportion of parents already take their children to one or other of the alternative schools.

The distance between The Dell Primary and Grove Street Primary is 0.7 miles, while the distance between The Dell and Rock Ferry Primary is 0.9 miles.

There are 22 schools within a 2 mile radius of The Dell Primary School.



### Conclusion

The degree of surplus places at The Dell, and the inefficient use of resources this creates, is our reason for proposing this closure.

The closure of the school means that some pupils will have to transfer to a larger primary school at a greater distance. A significant proportion of parents in the area have already made that choice. Closure would allow the LEA to use its resources better for the benefit of all pupils.

## **Option B: Closure of The Dell Primary and Well Lane Primary**

It is proposed to close Well Lane Primary and The Dell Primary at the end of summer term 2006. There are two main reasons for this decision:

- to remove surplus places;
- to provide a more cost-effective education.

### **Consideration of Factors**

Well Lane is a primary school of 183 pupils located “between the parks”, serving Tranmere and Rock Ferry. The Dell is a primary school of 132 pupils serving the southern part of Rock Ferry.

The proposal to close these schools is based on considerable spare capacity at the schools with little likelihood of the situation being significantly reversed.

Well Lane Primary has surplus places of 37% (106 places), the highest percentage of any school in the South Birkenhead small planning area. This is predicted to remain at 37% (108 places) by 2010.

The Dell Primary has surplus places of 29% (54 places), the second highest percentage of any school in the South Birkenhead small planning area. This is predicted to rise to 33% (62 places) by 2009.

All children currently and projected to attend these two schools could be accommodated by the remaining local schools without building any new classrooms.

However, dependent on the pattern of parental choice, Mersey Park may need to revert two existing resource rooms into classrooms, while Bedford Drive Primary may need to revert one existing resource room into a classroom. No changes to existing rooms should be required at either Rock Ferry Primary or Grove Street Primary.

Improvements would be made in order to ensure that accommodation at the schools to which the pupils transfer is of a high standard, taking into account the potential for extended schools.

The catchment zones of The Dell and Well Lane would be reallocated to the surrounding schools: Mersey Park, Bedford Drive, Rock Ferry Primary and Grove Street Primary. Example map B is attached showing how this could be accomplished.

This option would remove 386 surplus places.

This option will reduce projected surplus capacity in the South Birkenhead area in 2010 from 24% to 10%, and in the Bebington area from 11% to 8%.

### **Finance**

The LEA must provide education in a cost-effective manner. These schools are relatively expensive to maintain. Expressed as total expenditure per pupil, in 2003/2004:

- The Dell Primary School spent £5,324
- Well Lane Primary School spent £2,975

For comparison, the Wirral average for the same period was £2,737 per pupil.

The closure of these schools would result in some revenue savings in the education budget which would be recycled through the Budget Formula into increased funding for pupils at Wirral schools.

The Council would determine the future of the Well Lane and The Dell sites.

### **Effect on Standards**

The following paragraphs are OFSTED judgements on average points from the 2004 PANDA. Judgements are based on comparing average pupil performance over the last 3 years with National median pupil performance over the last 3 years.

#### *The Dell Primary*

- At Key Stage 1, the performance of pupils in Reading was close to the National median. In Mathematics, their performance was below the National median, and in Writing it was well below the National Median.
- At Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English was very low in comparison to the National median. Their performance in Mathematics and Science was well below the National median.

#### *Well Lane Primary*

- At Key Stage 1, the performance of pupils in Reading was below the National median. In Writing and Mathematics, their performance was very low in comparison to the National median.
- At Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English and Mathematics was very low in comparison to the National median. Their performance in Science was well below the National median.

#### *Special Educational Needs*

The next two paragraphs are OFSTED judgements from the 2004 PANDA.

#### *The Dell Primary*

The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (38.7%) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (2.6%) is above the national average.

#### *Well Lane Primary*

The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (37.1%) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.3%) is broadly in line with the national average.

The particular needs of all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs, will continue to be met in the schools to which they are transferred.

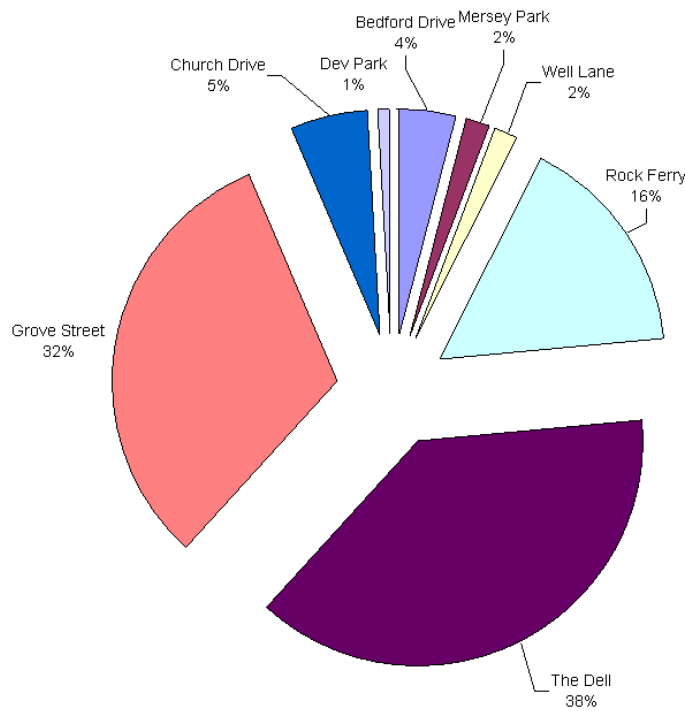
### **Parental choice**

#### *Catchment zone analysis (including Nursery pupils)*

Excluding Catholic provision, around 57% of pupils (219 pupils) who live in Well Lane's zone do not attend the zone school, while around 62% of pupils (192 pupils) who live in The Dell's zone do not attend their zone school. These are the highest migrations to alternative schools in South Birkenhead.

**The Dell Catchment zone  
-Actual Community School attended**

Total Community pupils in catchment = 311



**Number of pupils by school**

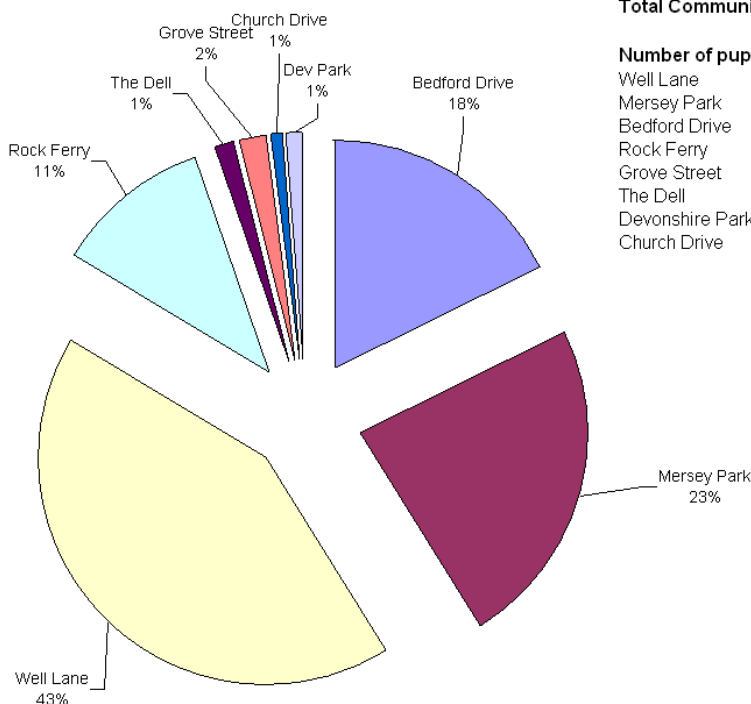
The Dell	119
Grove Street	99
Rock Ferry	50
Church Drive	17
Bedford Drive	13
Mersey Park	5
Well Lane	5
Devonshire Park	3

Almost as many pupils who live in the Dell's zone attend Grove Street Primary (32%, 99 pupils), as The Dell itself (38%, 119 pupils). Rock Ferry Primary receives 16% of pupils from The Dell zone (50 pupils).

Significant numbers of pupils who reside in Well Lane's zone attend Mersey Park Primary (23%, 89 pupils), Bedford Drive Primary (18%, 68 pupils) and Rock Ferry Primary (11%, 42 pupils).

**Well Lane Catchment zone  
-Actual Community School attended**

Total Community pupils in catchment = 381



**Number of pupils by school**

Well Lane	162
Mersey Park	89
Bedford Drive	68
Rock Ferry	42
Grove Street	8
The Dell	5
Devonshire Park	4
Church Drive	3

### *Pupil mobility*

This is a measure of pupil movement between local primary schools after initial registration. Local means the South Birkenhead small planning area. We looked at where pupils were first registered, either in January 2000 or at first registration in Reception, and compared this to where pupils were registered in January 2004. As would be expected, all schools showed pupil mobility within the local area.

For example, if 10 pupils left, and 20 pupils arrived, this would be a net gain of 10 pupils. If 20 pupils left and 10 pupils arrived, this would be a net loss of 10 pupils. For a school with a total of 200 first registered pupils, a net loss of 10 pupils is equivalent to 5% net loss.

In this period The Dell Primary had a net loss of pupils to alternative local schools (6%, 11 pupils). Only Well Lane Primary had a higher net loss (12%, 36 pupils). All other schools in this area had a local net gain during this period.

If Grove Street is included with the South Birkenhead schools, the net loss at The Dell Primary climbs to 11% (20 pupils).

The closure of The Dell Primary would have implications for class sizes at other schools, principally Grove Street Primary and Rock Ferry Primary.

The closure of Well Lane Primary would have implications for class sizes at other schools, principally Mersey Park Primary, Bedford Drive Primary and Rock Ferry Primary.

### **Community cohesion**

The Dell has a Breakfast and Afterschool club, a Nurture room and a SureStart room. A Behavioural Improvement Programme (BIP) unit was recently located within the school.

The SureStart unit, Nurture group and BIP unit will need to be relocated at appropriate school sites within the area.

Well Lane has an LEA designated Nursery class, which in January 2005 had 43 pupils.

The Dell also has an LEA designated Nursery class, which in January 2005 had 18 pupils.

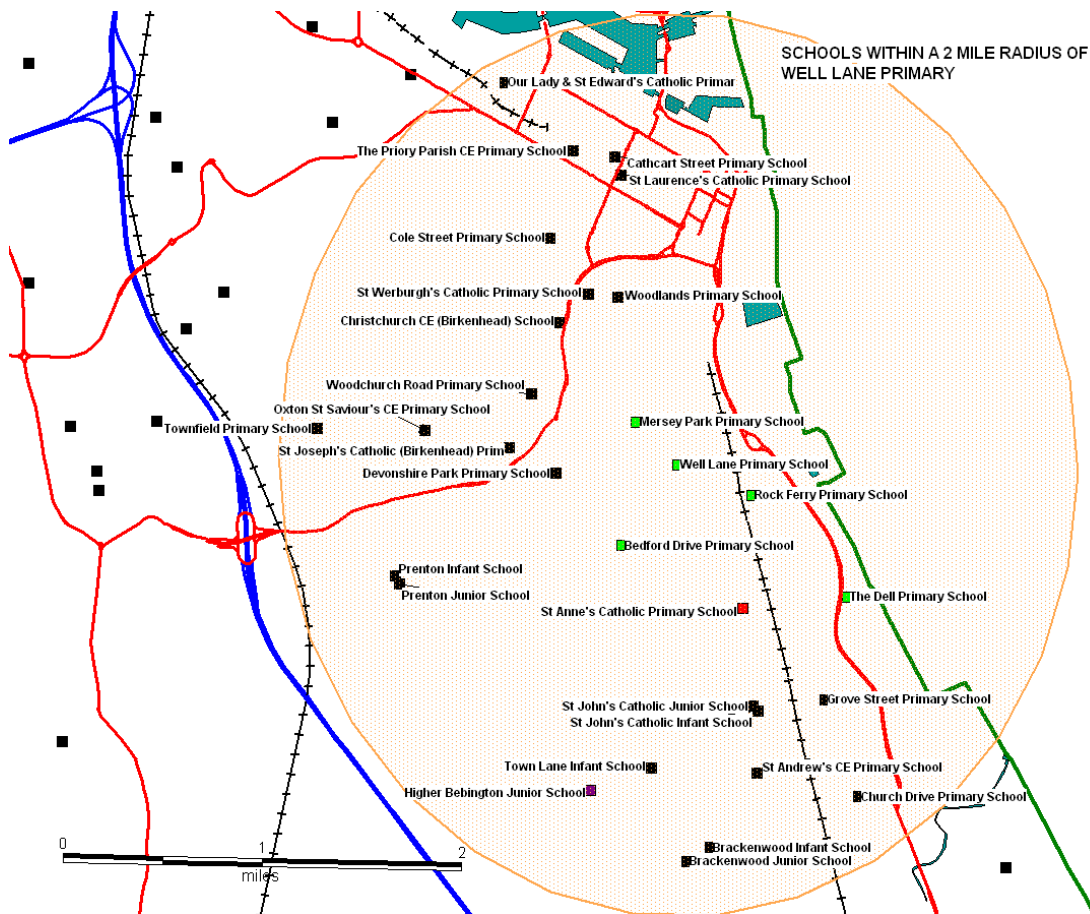
### **Travel and traffic**

Inevitably, closing these schools means that some parents and pupils, though not all, will have to travel further. However, additional journeys are not likely to be too great and a significant proportion of parents already take their children to one or other of the alternative schools.

The distance between The Dell Primary and Grove Street Primary is 0.7 miles, while the distance between The Dell and Rock Ferry Primary is 0.9 miles.

The distance between Well Lane Primary and Mersey Park Primary is 0.4 miles, between Well Lane and Bedford Drive Primary is 0.6 miles, and between Well Lane and Rock Ferry Primary is 0.6 miles.

There are 29 schools within a 2 mile radius of Well Lane Primary and 22 within 2 miles of The Dell Primary.



## Conclusion

The degree of surplus places at these two schools, and the inefficient use of resources this creates, is our reason for this proposal.

Closing the schools means that some pupils will have to transfer to a larger primary school at a greater distance. A significant proportion of parents in the area have already made that choice. This option will allow the LEA to use its resources more effectively for the benefit of all pupils.

**Option C. Closure of The Dell Primary and Well Lane Primary  
and  
Establishing a new school**

It is proposed to close Well Lane Primary and The Dell Primary at the end of summer term 2006. A new single form of entry primary school would be built on a site south of Bedford Road. There are two main reasons for this decision:

- to remove surplus places;
- to provide a more cost-effective education

**Consideration of Factors**

Well Lane is a primary school of 183 pupils located “between the parks”, serving Tranmere and Rock Ferry. The Dell is a primary school of 132 pupils serving the southern part of Rock Ferry.

The proposal to close these schools and open a new establishment is based on considerable spare capacity at the schools with little likelihood of the situation being significantly reversed. Establishing a new school is dependant on a suitable site becoming available, and the financial arrangements to build the school being in place.

Preliminary investigations have been made regarding the status of the Conway Playing Fields on Knowsley Road, which adjoin the Woodward Road estate. The Conway Playing Fields are designated Urban Greenspace (GR2) under the Unitary Development Plan.

Well Lane Primary has surplus places of 37% (106 places), the highest percentage of any school in the South Birkenhead small planning area. This is predicted to remain at 37% (108 places) by 2010.

The Dell Primary has surplus places of 29% (54 places), the second highest percentage of any school in the South Birkenhead small planning area. This is predicted to rise to 33% (62 places) by 2010.

In this option, Well Lane Primary and The Dell Primary would be closed, and their pupils re-distributed to surrounding schools, including the new school. A new single form of entry primary school would be built on a suitable site south of Bedford Road.

Other than the new primary school, this would not require building any new classrooms. However, dependant on the pattern of parental choice, Mersey Park may need to revert one or two existing resource rooms into classrooms, while Bedford Drive Primary may need to revert one existing resource room into a classroom. No changes in existing room use would be required at either Rock Ferry Primary or Grove Street Primary.

Improvements would be made in order to ensure that accommodation at the schools to which the pupils transfer is of a high standard, taking into account the potential for extended schools.

The Well Lane and Dell zones would be allocated to surrounding schools, including creating a zone for the new community school. Example map C is attached showing how this could be accomplished.

A new build school is always attractive to parents, and it is also likely to draw not only former Dell pupils, but also those from the surrounding schools, particularly affecting Grove Street Primary and Rock Ferry Primary.

This option will remove 206 surplus places.

The effect of closing Well Lane Primary and The Dell Primary and building a 210 place community primary school south of Bedford Road is likely to reduce projected surplus capacity in the South Birkenhead area in 2010 from 24% to 11%, but increase projected surplus capacity in the Bebington area in 2009 from 11% to 13%.

## **Finance**

The LEA must provide education in a cost-effective manner. These schools are relatively expensive to maintain. Expressed as total expenditure per pupil, in 2003/2004:

- The Dell Primary School spent £5,324
- Well Lane Primary School spent £2,975

For comparison, the Wirral average spend was £2,737 per pupil for the same period.

Closure of the two schools would result in some revenue savings in the education budget which would be recycled through the Budget Formula to increased funding for pupils at Wirral schools.

The Council would determine the future of the Well Lane and Dell sites.

There may be purchase and planning issues surrounding the acquisition of a site. The cost of building a new primary school of this size is likely to be in the region of £3 to £4 million pounds.

## **Effect on Standards**

The following paragraphs are OFSTED judgements on average points from the 2004 PANDA. Judgements are based on comparing average pupil performance over the last 3 years with National median pupil performance over the last 3 years.

### *The Dell Primary*

- At Key Stage 1, the performance of pupils in Reading was close to the National median. In Mathematics, their performance was below the National median, and in Writing it was well below the National Median.
- At Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English was very low in comparison to the National median. Their performance in Mathematics and Science was well below the National median.

### *Well Lane Primary*

- At Key Stage 1, the performance of pupils in Reading was below the National median. In Writing and Mathematics, their performance was very low in comparison to the National median.
- At Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English and Mathematics was very low in comparison to the National median. Their performance in Science was well below the National median.

### *Special Educational Needs*

The next two paragraphs are OFSTED judgements from the 2004 PANDA.

### *Well Lane Primary*

The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (37.1%) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.3%) is broadly in line with the national average.

## The Dell Primary

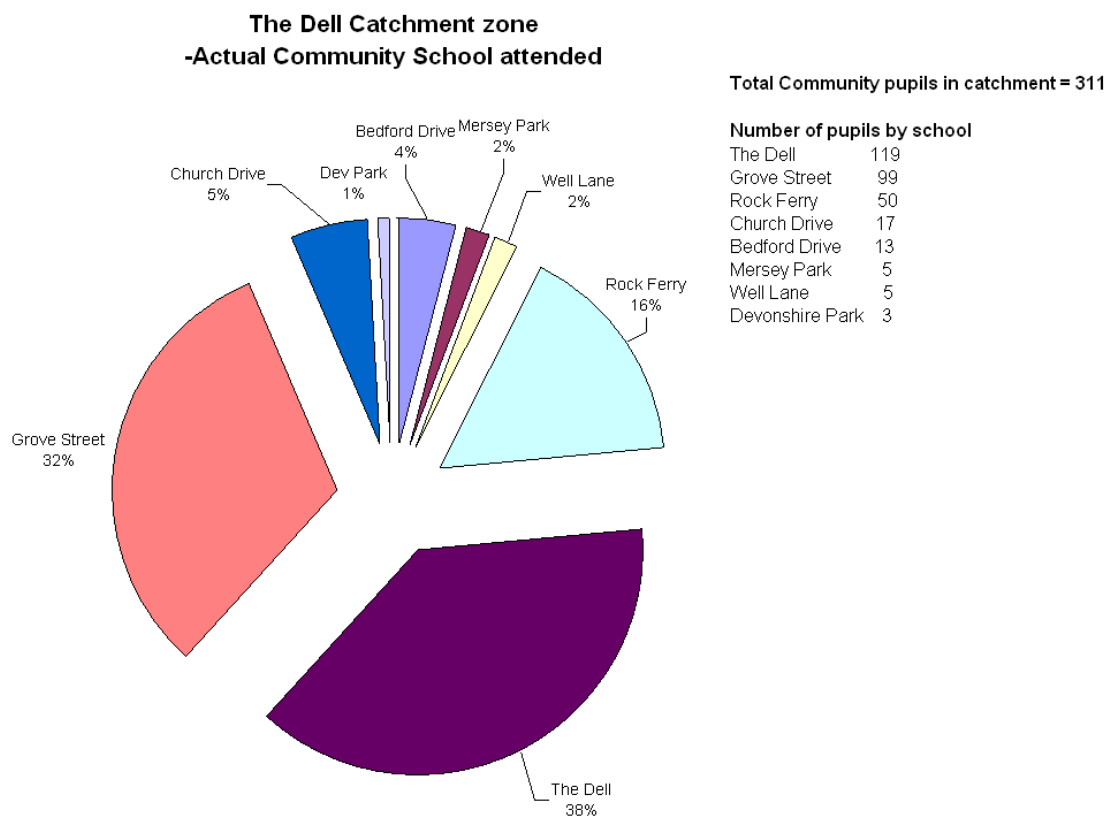
The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, (38.7%) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (2.6%) is above the national average.

The particular needs of all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs, will continue to be met in the schools to which they are transferred.

## Parental choice

### Catchment zone analysis (including Nursery pupils)

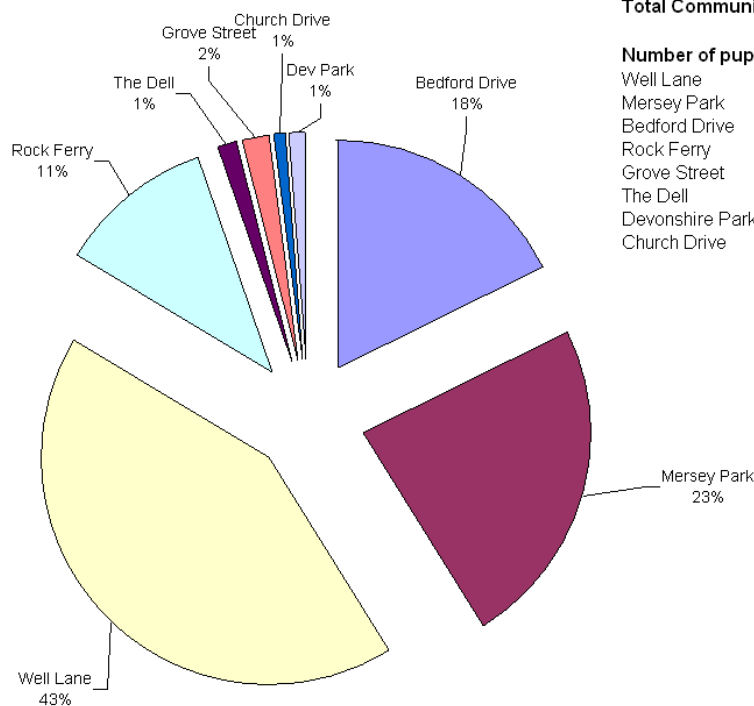
Excluding Catholic provision, around 57% of pupils (219 pupils) who live in Well Lane's zone do not attend the zone school, while around 62% of pupils (192 pupils) who live in The Dell's zone do not attend their zone school. These are the highest migrations to alternative schools in South Birkenhead.



Almost as many pupils who live in the Dell's zone attend Grove Street Primary (32%, 99 pupils), as The Dell itself (38%, 119 pupils). Rock Ferry Primary receives 16% of pupils from The Dell zone (50 pupils).

Significant numbers of pupils who reside in Well Lane's zone attend Mersey Park Primary (23%, 89 pupils), Bedford Drive Primary (18%, 68 pupils) and Rock Ferry Primary (11%, 42 pupils).

**Well Lane Catchment zone  
-Actual Community School attended**



Total Community pupils in catchment = 381

**Number of pupils by school**

Well Lane	162
Mersey Park	89
Bedford Drive	68
Rock Ferry	42
Grove Street	8
The Dell	5
Devonshire Park	4
Church Drive	3

***Pupil mobility***

This is a measure of pupil movement between local primary schools after initial registration. Local means the South Birkenhead small planning area. We looked at where pupils were first registered, either in January 2000 or at first registration in Reception, and compared this to where pupils were registered in January 2004. As would be expected, all schools showed pupil mobility within the local area.

For example, if 10 pupils left, and 20 pupils arrived, this would be a net gain of 10 pupils. If 20 pupils left and 10 pupils arrived, this would be a net loss of 10 pupils. For a school with a total of 200 first registered pupils, a net loss of 10 pupils is equivalent to 5% net loss.

In this period The Dell Primary had a net loss of pupils to alternative local schools (6%, 11 pupils). Only Well Lane Primary had a higher net loss (12%, 36 pupils). All other schools in this area had a local net gain during this period.

If Grove Street is included with the South Birkenhead schools, the net loss at The Dell Primary climbs to 11% (20 pupils).

Closure of The Dell Primary would have implications for class sizes at other schools, principally the New school, Grove Street Primary and Rock Ferry Primary.

The closure of Well Lane Primary would have implications for class sizes at other schools, principally Mersey Park Primary, Bedford Drive Primary and Rock Ferry Primary.

Creation of a new school with modern facilities could provide a positive element in the redevelopment of the area. A new school is always attractive to parents. The zone designated to the new school will therefore become vital.

**Community cohesion**

The Dell has a Breakfast and Afterschool club, a Nurture group and a SureStart room. A Behavioural Improvement Programme (BIP) BEST team was recently located within the school.

The BIP/BEST, Nurture group and SureStart currently located at The Dell will need to be relocated – either as part of the new building, or to one of the other local schools.

Well Lane has an LEA designated Nursery class, which in January 2005 had 43 pupils.

The Dell also has an LEA designated Nursery class, which in January 2005 had 18 pupils.

### **Travel and traffic**

Inevitably, this option means that some parents and pupils, though not all, will have to travel further. However, additional journeys are not likely to be too great and a significant proportion of parents already take their children to one or other of the alternative schools.

The distance between The Dell Primary and Grove Street Primary is 0.7 miles, while the distance between The Dell and Rock Ferry Primary is 0.9 miles.

The distance between Well Lane Primary and Mersey Park Primary is 0.4 miles, between Well Lane and Bedford Drive Primary is 0.6 miles, and between Well Lane and Rock Ferry Primary is 0.6 miles.

There are 29 schools within a 2 mile radius of Well Lane Primary and 22 within 2 miles of The Dell Primary.

### **Conclusion**

The degree of surplus places at these two schools, and the inefficient use of resources this creates, is our reason for this proposal.

This option means that some pupils will have to transfer to a larger primary school at a greater distance. A significant proportion of parents in the area have already made that choice. This option does not resolve the surplus places issue in this area, but will allow the Council to provide a modern school built to current specifications to enable curriculum delivery and positive experience for pupils and staff. There will be ramifications for pupil provision at neighbouring schools that may create unacceptable levels of surplus.

### Number of pupils on roll projected to 2010

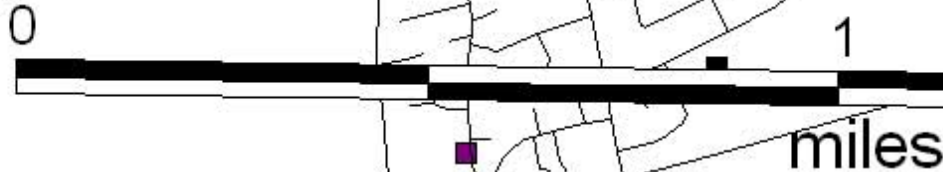
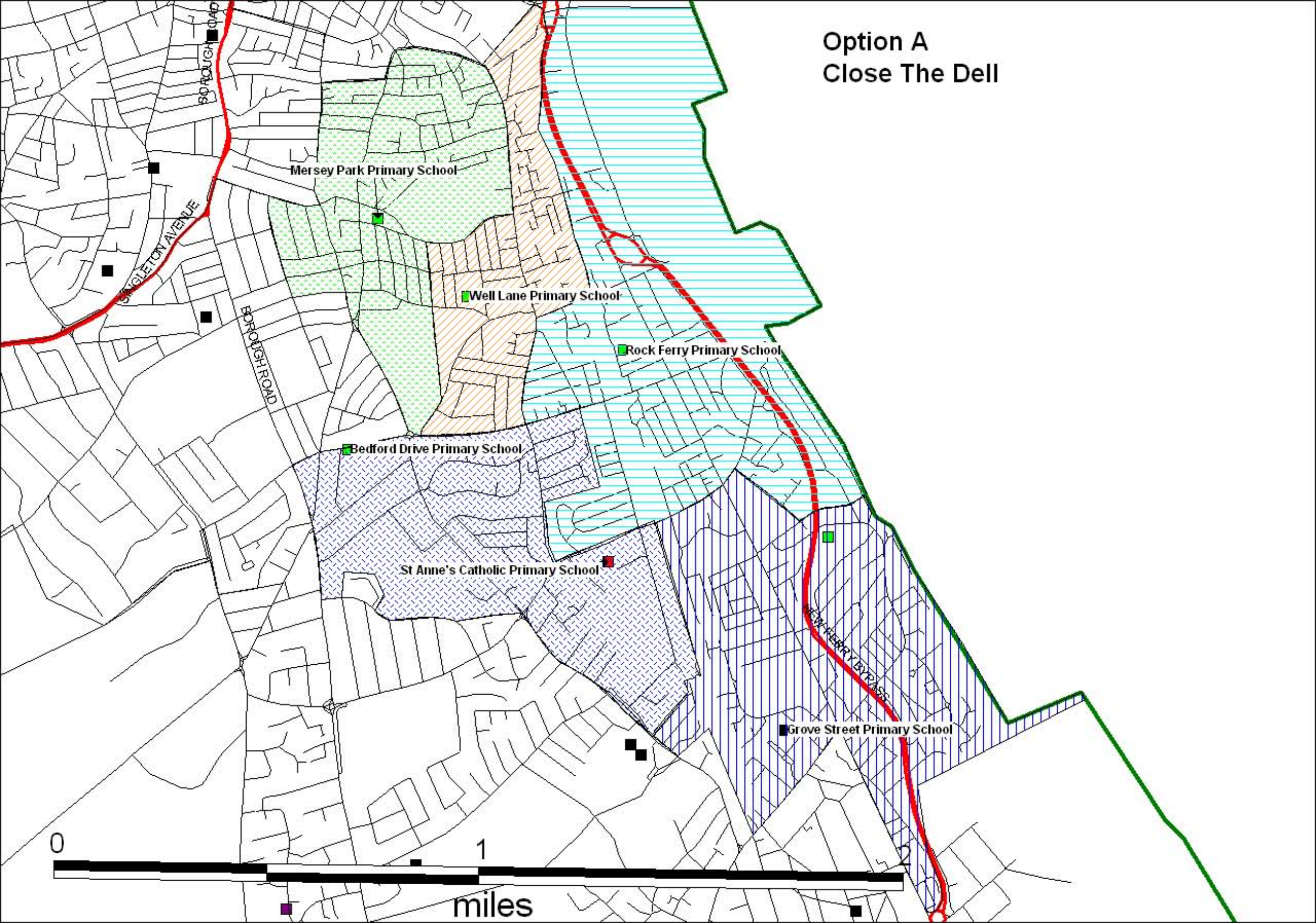
	Bedford Drive	Mersey Park	Well Lane	The Dell	Rock Ferry	Grove Street	New School
<b>2005 Number on Roll</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>313</b>	-
<b>Status quo 2010</b>	344	369	181	124	189	284	-
<b>Option A: Close Dell</b>	353	372	186	-	228	353	-
<b>Option B: Close Well Lane and Dell</b>	411	448	-	-	265	365	-
<b>Option C: Close Well Lane and Dell, New Build</b>	400	428	-	-	222	244	210

### Classroom use changes and new build requirements

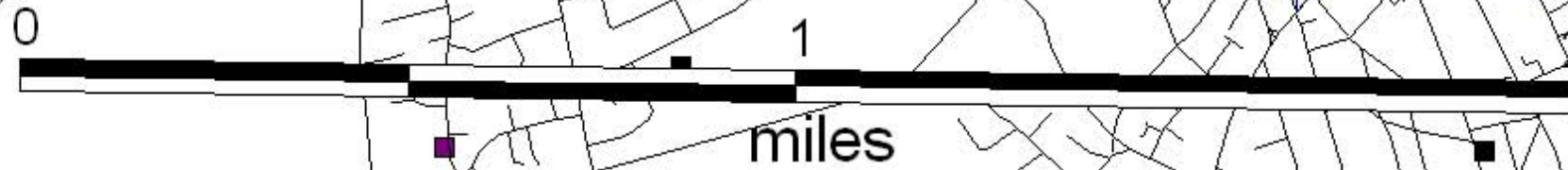
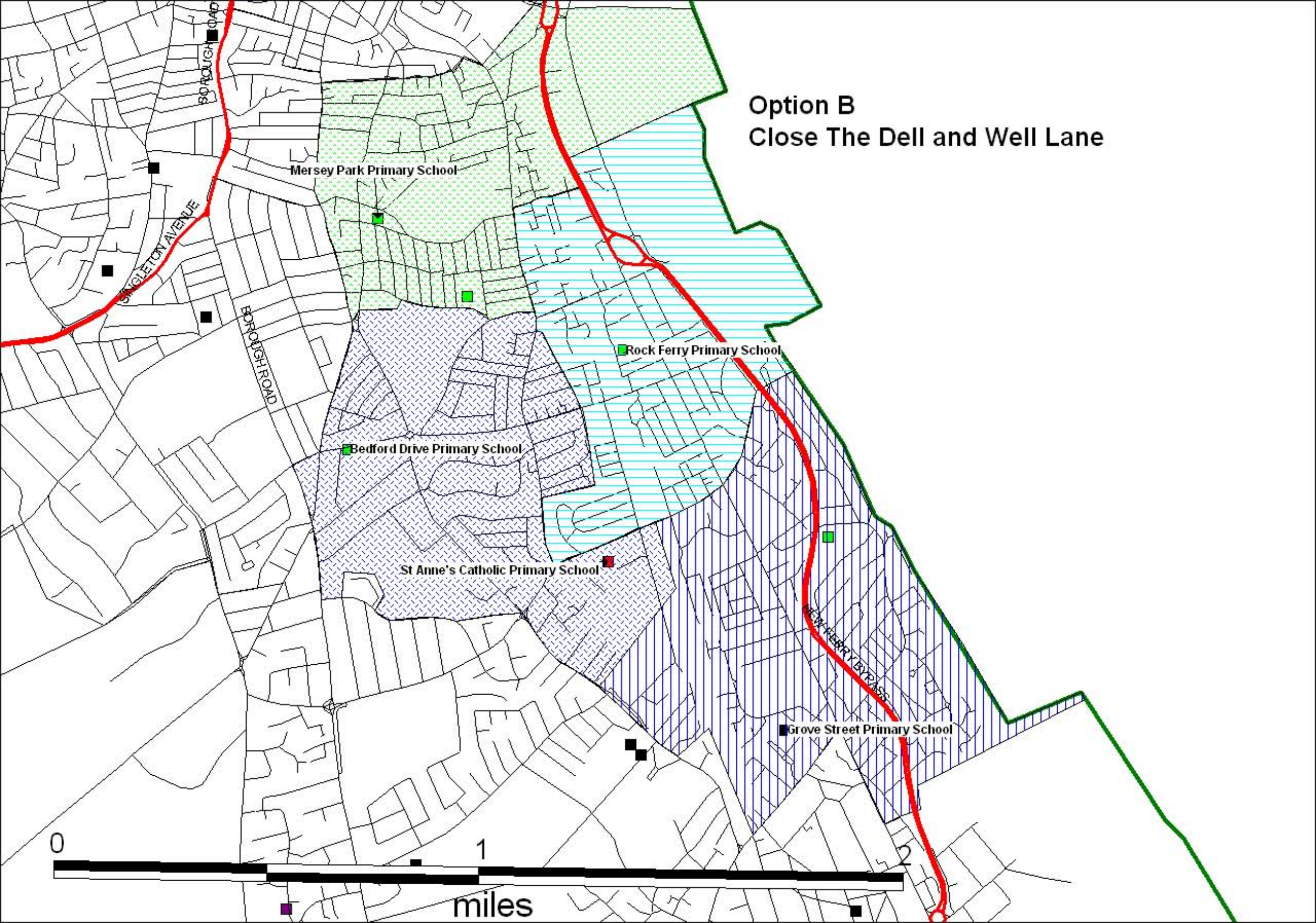
	Bedford Drive	Mersey Park	Well Lane	The Dell	Rock Ferry	Grove Street	New School
<b>Option A: Close Dell</b>	none	none	none	-	none	none	-
<b>Option B: Close Well Lane and Dell</b>	One classroom	Two classrooms	-	-	none	none	-
<b>Option C: Close Well Lane and Dell, New Build</b>	One classroom	One classroom	-	-	none	none	New Build 210 Primary

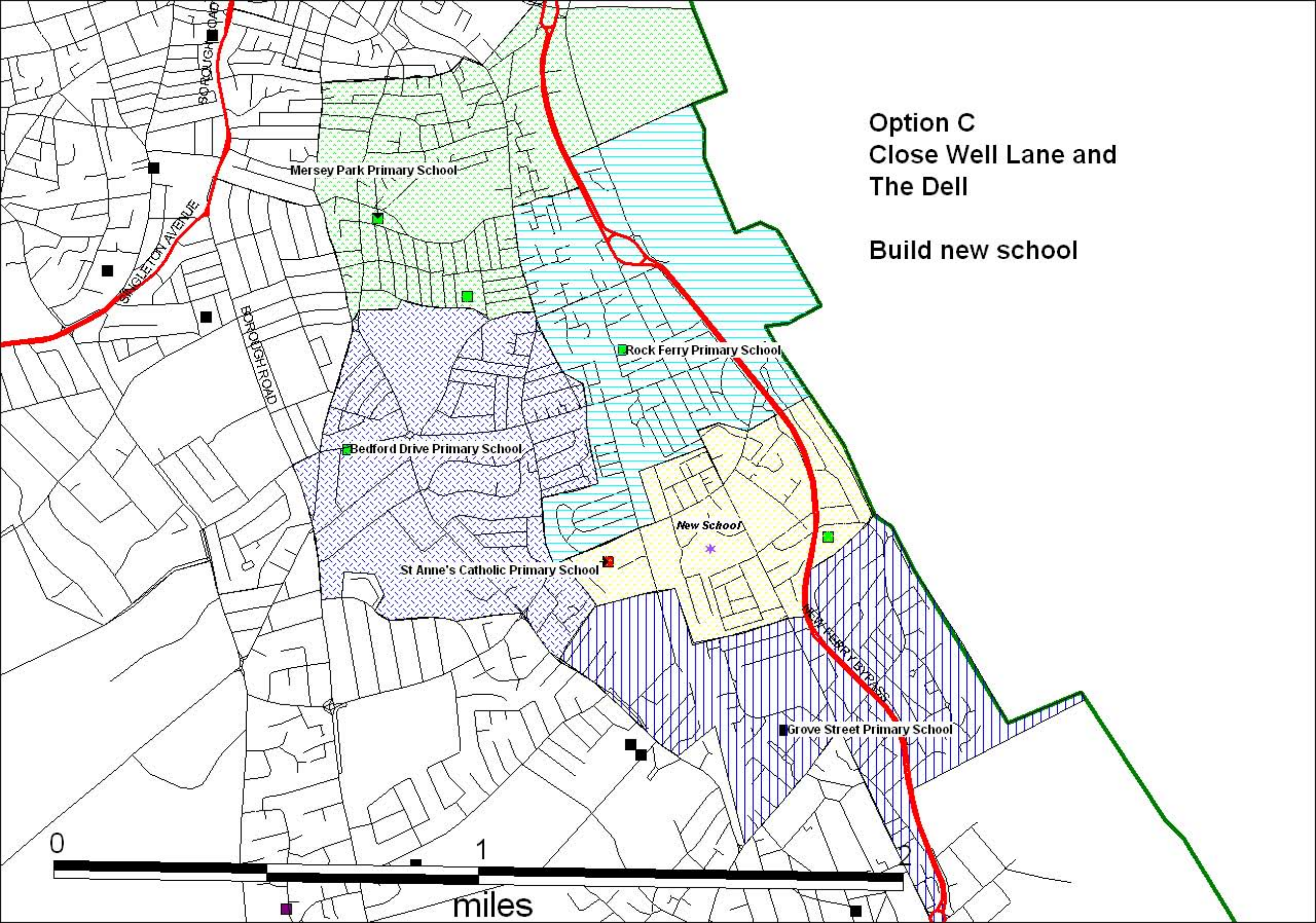
Changes in yellow require new build. Those in green involve internal changes to existing rooms.

**Option A  
Close The Dell**



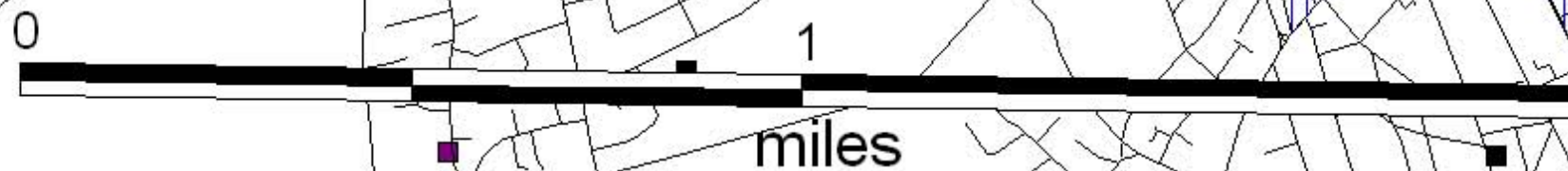
**Option B**  
**Close The Dell and Well Lane**





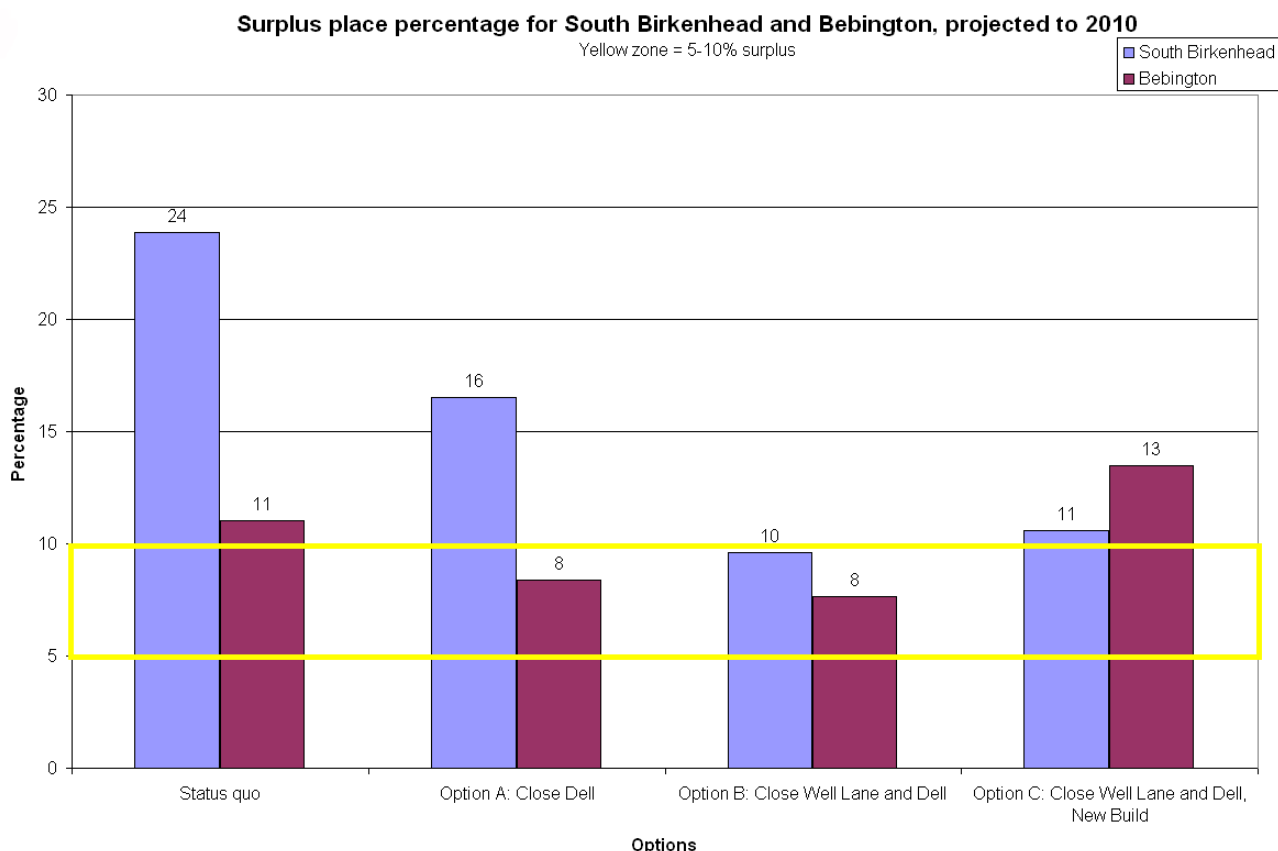
Option C  
Close Well Lane and  
The Dell

Build new school



## The Consultation

This graph shows how each option is predicted to change the percentage of surplus places in South Birkenhead by 2010. We have included Bebington Small Planning Area on the graph, because the options will effect this area too. Bebington SPA has not been part of the Primary Places Review.



We understand that closing a school is a difficult and sensitive issue for the whole community. Detailed community, transport and personnel matters will need to be considered before any option could take place.

It is important for you to understand that a decision has not already been made. The Council's Cabinet will see the comments made during consultation before making any decision about what happens next.

### What the options would mean for children

The main concern would be to place the children in their new schools with as little disturbance to their education as possible. Parents will be asked to say which local school they would prefer to send their child to. The normal admission criteria will be used to allocate places. As children will move together to local schools, they will have friends in their new school.

Catchment areas would be changed to make sure each school has the right number of children.

Children would get free transport if they live further than statutory walking distance from the nearest appropriate school. This is 2 miles for children aged under 8, and 3 miles for children 8 years old and above.

### **What the options would mean for staff**

If a school closes, all the staff would be made redundant and can be redeployed to other schools.

If two schools close and a new school opens, all the staff at both schools are made redundant and can be redeployed. The new school will need staff, and it is up to the new governing body to make appointments.

All staff on the redeployment register would be given preference when appointments are made. Teachers would not be “lost”. Wirral LEA has an excellent record on redeployment both for teachers and other school staff.

Wirral Council has agreed a Code of Practice on school re-organisation designed to support staff through the process of change.

### **What the options would mean for school sites**

The future of any closed site would be determined by the Council. The Council could decide to use the site for another purpose, such as a community centre. If a site was sold, the receipt would be invested in the Council’s properties, including schools. The Government usually has to approve the sale of school playing fields.

There are no plans or planning applications for any of the school sites, including the possible site for a new school. No decisions have been made about the future of any site at this stage.

## **Finding out more**

If you want more information about the options, you can find out more on the Internet. Go to [www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryPlaces](http://www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryPlaces), and click on South Birkenhead. The information is also on the main Wirral website, [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk) under Consultations.

You will find:

- The full Consultation document
- A Review pack of background information about all the schools in the area
- The Cabinet report and resolution
- How to send your comments to the Director

If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you can go to your local library where staff will help you log on and print out the information.

The full Consultation document and the Review pack are also available for you to read at **your school**, and at the following places:

#### **Libraries**

Bebington Central  
Beechwood  
Birkenhead Central  
Bromborough  
Higher Bebington  
New Ferry  
Ridgeway  
Rock Ferry  
St James  
Wallasey Central

#### **Community Centres**

Ballantyne  
Beechwood  
Charing Cross  
Gautby Road  
Livingstone Street  
New Ferry  
Noctorum  
Windsor Close  
Wirral Play Centre

#### **One Stop Shops**

Bebington  
Birkenhead  
Bromborough  
Rock Ferry

You can also look at these documents at Wallasey Town Hall and at the Hamilton Building on Conway Street, Birkenhead.

If you want a printed copy, please contact the Asset Management Team, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD, 0151 666 4351, or by e-mail at [primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk). Numbers are limited, and will be given out on a first-come-first-served basis.

### **What are the next steps?**

**Step 1.** The first step is to distribute the options and ask for views and comments. There will be a Consultation meeting for each school which is named in the options,

The Dell Primary at 7pm on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Well Lane Primary at 7pm on Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005

The meeting is an opportunity for parents, staff, governors and other people directly related to the school to have their views heard and noted by the Director of Education and Cultural Services and the Council's Cabinet Member for Education.

People associated with other local schools, and members of the public who want to, can write in with their views to the address on the next page. Anyone who wants to can write and say what they think.

When the Consultation ends, all the views and opinions received in writing and at the consultation meetings will be combined into a report to the Council's Cabinet. Cabinet members will read the report and decide what to do next. They may decide not to go further with an option at this stage. Members might make changes to the options, or they could decide to do more consultation.

**Step 2.** If the Cabinet decides to go ahead with an option, formal proposal notices must be published. Then there are six weeks when formal written objections and comments can be sent to the Director of Education and Cultural Services.

**Step 3.** When the six week representation period ends, the proposal, with the objections and comments, will be sent to the School Organisation Committee (SOC). The SOC has members from several different groups, including school governors, the Dioceses, the LEA and Early Years. The SOC can agree to:

- Approve the proposal
- Approve the proposal with changes
- Approve the proposal subject to other factors, such as obtaining planning permission
- Reject the proposal.

If the SOC can't agree, the Schools' Adjudicator will make the final decision. The Adjudicator is independent, and is appointed by the Government to make decisions on school proposals.

**Step 4.** If the proposal is approved, either by the SOC or by the Adjudicator, it will be put into practice. The earliest any proposal could take place is September 2006. Some proposals could take longer – they might need building work, for example.

## HAVING YOUR SAY

What do you think? Please make sure your consultation response is received by **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2005**.

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. Your comments can be sent by post, or by e-mail. If you find it helpful you can complete and return the questionnaire on the next page. There is also a feedback form on the Consultation website : [www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryPlaces](http://www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryPlaces).

*The postal address for return of questionnaires or written comments is:*

**Primary Places Review  
Director of Education and Cultural Services  
Hamilton Building  
Conway Street  
Birkenhead  
CH41 1FD**

**Or by e-mail to [primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)**

Please note: To make sure the Consultation is fully open and transparent, all the responses to this consultation will be made available for inspection.

## South Birkenhead Consultation Questionnaire

Please let us know the main relationships you have with the school(s) by putting a tick in the appropriate box or boxes. You might be a parent and a member of staff, for example.

School	Parent	Member of staff	Governor	Other person
The Dell Primary				
Well Lane Primary				
Other (please say which one)				

### *Comments*

Please use this space for your comments, or any additional options for this area. You can write more on another sheet if you need to.

**Please note that no change is not an option.** Please tick three options in order of preference. If you have an option for this area which is not listed, please write it in the comments box.

Option	First	Second	Third
Option A – Close The Dell			
Option B – Close The Dell and Well Lane			
Option C – Close The Dell and Well Lane, Build a new school			

Please tell us your name and address, and e-mail address if you have one. We will not use your personal information for anything other than this consultation.

Name

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Address

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Telephone

---

e-mail

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Please note: In order to ensure that this process is fully open and transparent, other people will be able to read all the responses to this consultation.

Address: Primary Places Review  
 Director of Education and Cultural Services  
 Hamilton Building  
 Conway Street  
 Birkenhead  
 CH41 4FD

Make sure your response is received by:

**TUESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> MAY 2005**

E-mail [primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)