

## **PRESCRIBED INFORMATION**

### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF CRADLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

<b>School Name:</b>	Cradley High School
<b>DfES Number:</b>	4114
<b>Local Education Authority area:</b>	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Diocese (if applicable):</b>	
<b>Proposals published by:</b>	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Date proposals published:</b>	24 November 2006
<b>Proposed implementation date:</b>	31 August 2008

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## Information about Cradley High School

Cradley High School opened in 1990 as a new secondary school adjacent to a public park which serves as the school's playing field.

Before 1990/91 the annual birth rate in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) was relatively high and stable. Since 1990/91 the annual number of live births has fallen steadily from 4,116 to its current level of around 3,400. This fall of around 20% has reduced the demand for primary school places across the Borough and in the area served by Cradley High School. As these smaller cohorts of children have moved through primary schools there are fewer children to fill secondary school places.

The impact of this drop in demand is beginning to affect secondary schools across the Borough. The impact has been evident in the number of admissions to Cradley High School year on year since 2002 and it is now the least popular secondary school in Dudley. Although the school has achieved year on year improvements at GCSE the number of Year 7 admissions has fallen consistently over the last five years. There were 34 first choice applications for 150 places in September 2006 and only 19 for September 2007. The school has capacity for 750 pupils but only 507 attended in January 2007. Forecasts show a fall to around 385 in September 2007 and around 285 in September 2008. Current year groups are as follows.

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Total
50	87	94	135	141	507

Source: Centris – January 2007

The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C passes has risen year on year and reached 73% in 2006. With English and mathematics included the percentage is 31% (Dudley average 43%). 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Dudley secondary schools. All of the nearest secondary schools achieved higher standards.

As pupil numbers fall Cradley High School will receive less money. The January 2006 pupil level annual school census (PLASC) recorded a fall of around 600 pupils attending Dudley schools (please see **Appendix 6**). This resulted in around £2.5 million less to distribute to school budgets. The forecast for January 2007 shows another fall of around 650 pupils and a further reduction of around £2.5 million to distribute. Cradley High School will also receive a smaller share of this reduced funding because they will have around 100 fewer pupils than in January 2006. The 2007/8 school budget will be around £300k less than 2006/7. The Governing Body will not be able to

set a balanced budget without significant reductions in staffing. Pupil forecasts show that this pattern will continue in 2008/9 and 2009/10.

The cost per pupil in 2006/7 was the highest in Dudley - £4,066 per pupil and 14% above the secondary average. In 2007/8 the cost per pupil will rise further.

The most recent financial monitoring agreed with the school (December 2006) is attached as **Appendix 10**. This indicates a 2006/07 deficit balance on the delegated budget of £120k (including EMAS) plus a £74k deficit on the trading account for leisure and adult education. Cradley High School will start 2007/08 financial year with a projected £194k deficit. Combined with the 2007/8 budget of around £300k less the funding gap is in the order of £494k. It will become increasingly difficult to maintain standards and provide a curriculum that fully meets each pupil's needs. Cradley High School is no longer sustainable.

### **Summary of proposal**

The proposal is to discontinue (close) Cradley High School with effect from 31 August 2008. Pupils in Year 11 will leave as normal in July 2007. Pupils currently in Year 10 will complete their education at Cradley High School and leave as Year 11 in July 2008. Pupils currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 would transfer to alternative secondary schools by 1 September 2007.

The proposal to close Cradley High School will benefit every secondary school in the Borough. Money will be directed to the education of all children and young people in other schools and not wasted on maintaining surplus places. It will enable the school to concentrate its limited resources on the remaining pupils and ensure younger pupils have access to the full range of educational provision in alternative, sustainable schools.

## **PRESCRIBED INFORMATION**

### **1. *What are the objectives of the proposal?***

#### **RESPONSE**

**The proposal has the following objectives:**

- To discontinue Cradley High School with effect from 31 August 2008.
- To ensure all pupils currently at Cradley High School have opportunities to achieve standards in line with their potential.
- To ensure pupils in the current Year 10 and Year 11 continue to receive appropriate education and care at Cradley High School until completion of their key stage 4 studies.
- To ensure pupils in current Years 7, 8 and 9 (key stage 3) have access to the full range of opportunities appropriate to key stage 3 and key stage 4 in alternative schools.
- To ensure all pupils continue to receive appropriate support at Cradley High School or alternative secondary schools e.g. gifted and talented, English as an additional language, special education needs.
- To invest resources released from the closure of Cradley High School in provision at other schools.
- To support staff at Cradley High School in securing alternative posts.

### **2. *Please give details of what consultation has taken place. Copies of:***

- a. *consultation documents, and***
- b. *the views and responses of the persons consulted should be attached.***

#### **RESPONSE**

**Prior to consultation on specific proposals for Cradley High School**

- KPMG (1999) independent report on the falling demand for places.
- OFSTED (2000 and 2002) reports on Dudley LEA commented on the growing issue of surplus places
- School Organisation Plan 2003 – 2008 approved by Dudley SOC following consultation included demand for places in each planning area of Dudley MBC
- Primary Review Refresh Consultation (2004) detailed falling demand for

places with consultation on a framework of principles and statement of intent. Consultation document and meetings with all schools.

- Termly briefings for chairs of governors since January 2005 including falling pupil numbers and impact on primary and secondary school budgets
- Select Committee and Working Group Meetings in 2005
- Consultation meetings for headteachers, chairs of governors and councillors on primary school review (May – June 2005) included data on demand for primary and secondary places
- Consultation with secondary headteachers (February 2005) on secondary provision, demand for places and Building Schools for the Future
- Consultation at secondary Headteachers Conference (Summer 2005)
- Pupil forecasts shared with all schools annually
- Schools Forum considered impact of falling pupil numbers on school budgets prior to 2005/6 and 2006/7 budgets.
- Section 52 budget statements sent to all schools annually.
- Briefing with new opposition spokesperson on secondary trends early in 2006
- Meetings with Union representatives regarding Cradley and staffing issues
- Meetings with headteachers to consider timing of consultation process

## **Consultation**

Consultation on proposal to close Cradley High School ran from 6 July to 28 September 2006. The consultation document was copied to all parents, staff governors and many others. The full consultation list is included on pages 2 – 3 of the Consultation Document attached as **Appendix 1**. The consultation document was also available on [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk) along with a wide range of additional information. The consultation document offered opportunities for consultation in different languages. No requests were received. Summary documents available at the Special Halesowen Area Committee meeting were translated into Arabic in an effort to aid communication and are attached as **Appendix 11**.

Consultation meetings were held for parents, staff, governors, pupils and Halesowen Area Committee. A total of 86 written responses were received including 61 letters, 16 emails, 5 telephone calls, 2 complaints, 1 petition and 1 list of pledges to attend Cradley High School in future. All responses are included in the Consultation Report attached as **Appendix 2**. All responses were acknowledged and questions answered, many in considerable detail. Notes of meetings were recorded and published on the website along with

Frequently Asked Questions. Where new requests for information were received it was provided (where available) and added to the website. All notes of meetings, correspondence and responses are available to School Organisation Committee in a separate file and to any member of the public by appointment.

A number of responses were received after the consultation closing date. Whilst they were not included in the consultation report the responses were acknowledged, questions answered, added to the record of evidence and considered by the Lead Member for Children's Services.

All of the responses were taken into account by the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services. On the basis of all of the information gathered before the consultation and the responses received a decision was taken to publish a statutory notice with no amendments to the proposal.

### **Statutory Notice**

The nearest secondary schools were involved in discussions about transitional arrangements for Cradley High School pupils. This included consideration of options for increasing the number of places in the nearest schools. Windsor High School is a regularly oversubscribed Foundation School. By the time of the intended publication date of 23 November, Windsor High School had not reached a position regarding the risk of legal challenge from parents that had made unsuccessful applications for places, on any decision to admit Cradley pupils. A draft version of the statutory notice was sent in error to the Express and Star newspaper. The draft notice stated that pupils would be expected to transfer to local schools and naming Windsor High School. The error was identified too late to stop publication in the newspaper but the notice was not posted anywhere else.

The correct version of the statutory notice with amended dates was published on 24 November and is attached as **Appendix 8**. It was posted at the main entrance to Cradley High School and libraries. The statutory notice was also replaced on several occasions following removal by a person or persons unknown.

- 3. *Please provide a map showing the location of the school and all other community, voluntary and foundation schools within the relevant radius of the school (two miles for primary, three for secondary)***

## RESPONSE

Attached as **Appendix 3** is a map showing the location of Cradley High School and all other schools within a radius of three miles.

**4. Please provide a list of all schools within the relevant radius of the school, stating which of such schools are maintained by a different local education authority, together with the following information in respect of each such school for the current school year, and (except for the information specified in sub-paragraph d) the previous school year:**

- a. the admission number for each relevant age group**
- b. the number of year groups**
- c. the capacity of the school; and**
- d. the number of pupils at the school**

**and a forecast of the matters specified in sub-paragraphs b to d for each of the subsequent five school years**

## RESPONSE

**Secondary Schools Maintained by Dudley MBC within a three mile radius of Cradley High School**

Please see **Appendix 4** for Dudley school lists.

<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>PAN</b>	<b>No of Year Groups</b>	<b>Net Capacity</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
The Earls High School	240	5	1162	1156
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	180	5	761*	847
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	5	720	676
Leasowes Community College	234	5	1125	1184
Old Swinford Hospital School*		7		
Pedmore Technology College	182	5	910	807
Pensnett School of Technology	130	5	650	592
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	235	5	1177	1166
The Wordsley School	151	5	755	682
Thorns Community College	270	5	1350	1350
Windsor High School	280	5	1472**	1369

Source: Dudley MBC, Centris – January 2007

\*Old Swinford Hospital School offers places to boarding pupils and their admissions are calculated differently. This is shown in the following table.

### Old Swinford Hospital School

Data provided by OSH School December 2006

PAN	Year	Current pupil numbers*
60	7	59
60	8	56
75 (Further intake of 15)	9	69
75	10	80
75	11	71
135	12	138
113	13	132
<b>Total for school</b>		<b>605</b>

### Pupil Forecasts for Dudley MBC

The error range in Dudley MBC primary forecasts from 2000/1 to 2005/6 has ranged from 0.04% to 0.65% and secondary from 0.06% to 1.13%. This is well within the range required for forecasting. The following table shows actual numbers for 2005/6 and forecasts to 2010/11. The forecasts take into account a range of factors including numbers of children in school and trends in inward and outward migration. The forecasts show

- Loss of 1,193 primary age pupils between 2005/6 and 2010/11, a fall of 4.6%
- Loss of 1,039 secondary age pupils between 2005/6 and 2010/11, a fall of 5.0%.

The impact of the falling birth rates and demand for places at Cradley High School between 1997 and 2005/6 is attached as **Appendix 6**.

### Pupil Forecasts for Dudley MBC

	Actual	Projected				
	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
<b>Primary</b>						
Year R	3,475	3,389	3,429	3,427	3,422	3,422
Year 1	3,510	3,486	3,401	3,450	3,444	3,439
Year 2	3,571	3,551	3,527	3,451	3,496	3,488
Year 3	3,697	3,585	3,564	3,552	3,592	3,508
Year 4	3,796	3,733	3,621	3,611	3,592	3,508
Year 5	3,883	3,789	3,728	3,627	3,611	3,593
Year 6	3,841	3,883	3,791	3,740	3,636	3,615
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,773</b>	<b>25,416</b>	<b>25,060</b>	<b>24,858</b>	<b>24, 668</b>	<b>24,580</b>
<b>Secondary</b>						
Year 7	3,950	3,902	3,936	3,876	3,820	3,709
Year 8	3,997	3,938	3,895	3,939	3,876	3,815
Year 9	4,202	4,014	3,960	3,927	3,967	3,899
Year 10	4,119	4,187	4,005	3,963	3,936	3,959
Year 11	4,013	4,065	4,137	3,968	3,922	3,889
Year 12	259	232	235	239	231	232
Year 13	214	238	213	216	231	212
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,754</b>	<b>20,576</b>	<b>20381</b>	<b>20,127</b>	<b>19,974</b>	<b>19,715</b>
<b>Dudley Total</b>	<b>46,527</b>	<b>45,992</b>	<b>45,441</b>	<b>44,985</b>	<b>44,642</b>	<b>44,296</b>

**Pupil Forecasts for secondary schools within 3 miles of Cradley High School**

<b>2006/7 - ACTUAL</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y 8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cradley High School	50	87	94	135	141	507
The Earls High School	239	230	228	235	227	1159
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	183	177	182	186	155	883
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	141	135	129	127	676
Leasowes Community College	182	233	232	239	257	1143
Old Swinford Hospital School*						
Pedmore Technology College	134	140	147	182	167	770
Pensnett School of Technology	84	91	124	102	124	525
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	233	233	236	234	227	1163
The Wordsley School	149	146	127	149	126	697
Thorns Community College	268	272	268	269	270	1347
Windsor High School	280	265	263	281	273	1362

<b>2007/8</b>	<b>Y7*</b>	<b>Y 8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total*</b>
Cradley High School	19	50	87	94	135	385
The Earls High School	240	239	230	228	235	1159
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	180	183	177	182	186	883
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	144	141	135	129	693
Leasowes Community College	182	182	233	232	239	1068
Old Swinford Hospital School*						
Pedmore Technology College	130	130	136	145	179	720
Pensnett School of Technology	84	84	91	124	102	485
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	236	236	235	235	234	1176
The Wordsley School	150	150	145	125	147	717
Thorns Community College	269	269	270	268	268	1344
Windsor High School	280	280	265	263	281	1362

<b>2008/9</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y 8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cradley High School	19	19	50	87	94	269
The Earls High School	240	240	230	228	235	1173
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	183	183	177	182	186	911
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	144	141	135	129	693
Leasowes Community College	182	182	233	232	239	1068
Old Swinford Hospital School*						
Pedmore Technology College	134	134	140	147	182	737
Pensnett School of Technology	84	84	84	91	124	467
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	233	233	233	236	234	1169
The Wordsley School	149	149	149	145	125	720
Thorns Community College	269	269	269	270	268	1345
Windsor High School	280	280	280	265	263	1368

<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y 8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cradley High School	19	19	19	50	87	194
The Earls High School	240	240	240	230	228	1178
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	183	183	183	177	182	908
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	144	144	141	135	708
Leasowes Community College	182	182	182	233	232	1011
Old Swinford Hospital School*						
Pedmore Technology College	134	134	134	140	147	689
Pensnett School of Technology	84	84	84	84	91	427
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	233	233	233	233	236	1168
The Wordsley School	149	149	149	149	145	741
Thorns Community College	269	269	269	269	270	1346
Windsor High School	280	280	280	280	265	1385

<b>2010/11</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y 8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cradley High School	19	19	19	19	50	126
The Earls High School	240	240	240	240	230	1190
Hillcrest School and Com. Coll.	183	183	183	183	177	909
Holly Hall Maths & Comp. Coll.	144	144	144	144	141	717
Leasowes Community College	182	182	182	182	233	961
Old Swinford Hospital School*						
Pedmore Technology College	134	134	134	134	140	676
Pensnett School of Technology	84	84	84	84	84	420
Redhill School & Spe. Lang. Coll.	233	233	233	233	233	1165
The Wordsley School	149	149	149	149	149	745
Thorns Community College	269	269	269	269	269	1345
Windsor High School	280	280	280	280	280	1400

\*Old Swinford Hospital School is subject to expansion proposals. Forecasts have been excluded.

**5. Please provide the following information relating to the school for the current school year and (except for the information specified in sub-paragraph d.) the previous school year:**

- a. the admission number for each relevant age group**
- b. the number of year groups**
- c. the capacity of the school; and**
- d. the number of pupils at the school.**

## **RESPONSE**

The admission number for each year group at Cradley High School is 150.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Total	Surplus places (%)
Sept 05	96	101	129	151	148	625	16.7%
Sept 06	50	91	92	136	144	513	31.6%
Sept 07 (est)	19*	50	91	92	136	388	48.3%

\*Number of first choice applications received (closing date November 2006)

There are 5 year groups – Years 7 - 11

The capacity of the school is 750.

Please see forecasts in previous section and also **Appendix 6**.

**6. Please provide the following information relating to the accommodation at the school:**

- a. the location of the accommodation**
- b. whether the school occupies a single or split site; and**
- c. details of general and specialist accommodation.**

The school is situated on Homer Hill, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UP. It is bordered on three sides by private housing and on the fourth side by open public parkland / field. Please see **Appendix 3** and **Appendix 5** for maps.

The school occupies a single site.

**Cradley High School - Details of Accommodation**

	Area	Nr of Rooms
General Teaching	892m2	19
ICT Classrooms	221m2	7
Science Classrooms	532m2	6
Food Technology Classrooms	80m2	1
Art Classrooms	142m2	2
Graphics Classrooms	47m2	1
Technology & Textiles	260m2	3
Music	116m2	3
Drama Classrooms	102m2	1
EMAS Classrooms	31m2	1
PSE	48m2	1
Gymnasiums & Sports Halls	844m2	3
Learning Support	67m2	1
Library Areas	158m2	2
School Hall	201m2	1
Dining Halls	109m2	1
Science Preparation	98m2	5
Office Areas & Staff Rooms	390m2	20
Storage Rooms	449m2	63

Corridors 178m2

Total Net Area of School 4965m2

The school faces significant health and safety issues resulting from shared use of the public land for sports activities. There are tensions between the use made by the school of the grass area in order to fulfil the statutory requirements of the national curriculum and the use made by other community groups. In addition, the school has no right to restrict public access to parkland. Consequently, whilst learning is taking place members of the community are at liberty to walk across this land. Similarly, the general public use this area to walk their dogs and the problems of dogs fouling the areas where P.E. activities occur is another frequent cause for concern. The implications for pupil safety are self evident.

The school boundary to the open parkland is very close to the school buildings making it impossible to provide any barriers or additional security for the school buildings. The risk of unlawful access to the school is high.

### **Condition Backlog**

The condition backlog for this school totals approximately £1million based on the latest condition survey carried out in 2005.

The condition backlog items include;

- Repairs to Electrical Services
- Repairs to Mechanical Plant
- Repairs to Floors and Stairs
- Repairs to Internal Structure
- Repairs to External Structure
- Repairs to Ceilings
- Refurbishment of Existing Sanitary Services
- Replacement of Fixed Furniture
- Repairs to Roof Coverings

The condition backlog can be further broken down into Priority Two (essential work required within two years) which totals £80,000 and Priority Three (desirable work required within three to five years) which totals £905,000.

### **Suitability, Fitness for Purpose**

An initial survey was carried out in 2002 and this was reviewed in January 2005. The DfES methodology followed uses four categories to assess building suitability:-

Category A – Unable to Teach Curriculum – i.e. there should be enough appropriate spaces to accommodate all pupils for the whole of the curriculum.

Category B – Teaching Methods Inhibited – i.e. the numbers and types of teaching spaces or more commonly the size and environment of the teaching spaces.

Category C – Management of the School Adversely Affected – i.e. unsuitability of spaces or the way they relate to each other may affect the organisation or management of the School.

Category D – i.e. Pupil or staff morale or pupil behaviour affected adversely – i.e. the unsuitability of a space may affect staff morale or pupil behaviour.

There are a number of suitability issues with the buildings

#### Direct Impact on Education B

- Small Classrooms
- Small ICT Classrooms
- Ventilation Problems
- Small Food Technology Classrooms
- Small Staff/Admin areas
- Inadequate Storage
- Small Music Classrooms

#### Direct Impact on Education C

- Inadequate Textiles Classrooms
- Heating problems
- Inadequate Office Facilities
- Small Classrooms

#### Indirect Impact on Education D

- Narrow Corridors
- Inadequate heating and ventilation
- Noise pollution from unsuitable roof coverings

Inadequate storage  
Inadequate lighting  
Inadequate parking facilities

Circulation around the school is hindered by the majority of corridors being too narrow to allow the easy passage of large numbers of pupils. A number of projects have been identified for funding from central budgets including replacement of temporary classrooms (mobiles) and replacement of the boiler, although this work has not yet been commissioned. The school also commission their own projects, utilising devolved capital. The Directorate of Children's Services Buildings and Estates Team has not been provided with details of any projects during the last three years.

***7. Please provide details of proposals for pupils who are currently at the school to transfer to other schools together with any appropriate transitional provisions.***

**RESPONSE**

There are sufficient places in Dudley secondary schools for the 231 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. It is proposed that pupils will transfer to a range of local secondary schools. Each pupil and parent will be supported by the Directorate of Children's Services to meet their specific needs. Advice will be provided on the availability of places and the range of opportunities available in alternative schools. Arrangements are in place for parents to visit alternative schools (subject to School Organisation Committee decision). Schools Forum will also consider a range of financial measures to support parents and schools affected by any decision to discontinue Cradley High.

Current Years 10 and 11 are not affected by this proposal. Year 11 will leave as normal in July 2007 and Year 10 will continue at the school through to Year 11 until they leave in July 2008. The proposal requires current pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to transfer to alternative schools by September 2007. Discussions are taking place to ensure that sufficient places are created in other schools to meet preferences of pupils currently attending Cradley High. Additional places in local schools will be created by September 2007 in accordance with the School Admissions Code of Practice 2007.

*Closing schools*

*1.40 While a merger or replacement of a school by another school or an Academy often results in children transferring to the roll of the replacement or merged*

*school, the situation is different when a school is not replaced and children transfer to different schools. In these circumstances the local authority **must** collaborate with all schools in an area to consider the best way of securing provision for children at the closing school. Where it has not been feasible to manage a school's closure over a transitional period i.e. stopping new admissions and continuing with existing pupils, the following are good practices which have been successfully adopted:*

- a) The local authority identifies schools with places available, negotiating with them and other schools which may be able to help, then offers places to children from the closing school.*
- b) The local authority carries out a preference exercise with parents of children on roll at the closing school, considering their preferences and, where necessary, negotiating with schools to provide additional places. In these circumstances, it is acceptable to give precedence to these children over any on waiting lists (see paragraphs 3.26 to 3.28) and, along with admitting in accordance with an in-year fair access protocol (see paragraphs 3.14 to 3.19), to admit above the school's published admission number.*

*Extract from School Admissions Code of Practice 2007*

Parents have been requested to express initial preferences for alternative schools to allow maximum time for parents to make informed choices and ensure transfer processes are fully supported. The provisional timetable for working with parents, pupils and schools is detailed below. Subject to School Organisation Committee approval of the proposal to discontinue Cradley High School all pupils and parents will be supported throughout the transfer process (Years 7, 8 and 9) or during their remaining time at the school (Years 10 and 11).

Pupils with special educational needs will receive specific support to ensure their needs are met. Specialist services will work with parents, pupils, Cradley High School and receiving schools to ensure that each pupil is supported effectively before, during and after transfer to alternative schools. Pupils remaining at Cradley will receive similar support. The numbers of pupils with statements of special educational need, School Action Plus and School Action are attached as **Appendix 11**.

## Broad Timeline for transitional arrangements

Event	Date
Meetings at Cradley High with parents/carers to gather preliminary preferences	9, 10 & 11.1.07
Preliminary preference data shared with schools	25.1.07
School Organisation Committee	7.2.07
<b>Subject to SOC decision</b>	
Application forms available	9.2.07
Open days / evenings at other schools	w/c 19.2.07
Admission drop in sessions at Cradley High to assist with form completion	w/c 19.2.07
Closing date for return of forms	2.3.07
Chase outstanding forms	5.3.07
Process applications in consultation with preference schools	19.3.07 – 30.3.07
Offer places	8.5.07
Induction	June

For the current and estimated surplus places in Dudley secondary schools please see tables 3 to 5 in the Consultation document attached as **Appendix 1**. Discussions are continuing to ensure that more places are available in all schools nearest to Cradley High by September 2007.

### **8. Please provide an assessment of the quality of any schools to which it is proposed that such pupils may transfer**

## RESPONSE

Dudley knows its schools well. Information is gathered from a range of sources including school self-evaluations of how well they provide for children and from regular contact with a range of services. Schools are also assessed externally against an inspection framework operated by OFSTED. The most recent OFSTED reports can be viewed on: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports). Further information is also available from individual schools. **Copies of the most recent OFSTED reports for secondary schools are available to School Organisation Committee in a separate file.** Scrutiny of these reports will confirm that the quality of educational provision in alternative schools is at least as good and often better than at Cradley High School. Please see section 9 of the prescribed information for further comment.

Some pupils live closer to Sandwell schools e.g. Heathfield. OFSTED reports for Sandwell secondary schools can also be viewed on the above website.

School profiles for every Dudley secondary school are available on [www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk](http://www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk). **These profiles have been reproduced for School Organisation Committee in a separate file.** Scrutiny of these profiles will confirm that the quality of educational provision in alternative schools is at least as good and often better than at Cradley High School. All of the nearest secondary schools achieved a higher percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C grades including English and mathematics. Cradley High achieved 31% in 2006 and was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22. Please see league table on page 29 and also consultation document attached as **Appendix 1.**

The overall assessment of the quality of provision in alternative secondary schools is at least as good as at Cradley High. The quality in alternative schools is also sustainable. Cradley High is no longer sustainable.

**9. *Please provide a statement as to whether the school has been inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996/Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 during the last three years and, if it has, the date of the inspection and details of the outcome.***

## **RESPONSE**

The school was inspected on 9 and 10 November 2005. This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Extract from Ofsted Report

‘Cradley High School judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory. Inspectors agree because it is an improving school that is coping effectively with recent staffing changes and is providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school’s main education principle ‘the expectation that all pupils can and should succeed’ is central to its drive to raise standards and is evident in many aspects of its work. Many pupils enter the school with low standards and often with poor literacy skills. Changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum have helped pupils in the school gain better results, with five or more higher grade GCSEs now in line with the national average. Standards in Key Stage 3 and mathematics are improving but still low.

The school supports and cares for the pupils well and most pupils say they enjoy their time in school. However, although the school has worked hard to improve attendance rates they remain poor. Behaviour is generally satisfactory around the school and pupils enjoy a variety of sporting and revision clubs.

Recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning are starting to impact upon standards but these are not effectively monitored to ensure consistency across all parts of the school. The school has identified appropriate priorities for further development and it has the capacity to build effectively upon the satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection. The school gives satisfactory value for money.'

OFSTED use the following inspection grades

Grade 1 – Outstanding

Grade 2 – Good

Grade 3 – Satisfactory

Grade 4 – Inadequate

A range of criteria are graded using this scale. Cradley High School was assessed as

- grade 2 against one criterion for how well learners are cared for, guided and supported.
- grade 3 against 19 criteria including the effective and efficient deployment of resources to achieve value for money
- grade 4 against 3 criteria

**The overall effectiveness of the school was graded 3.** In the context of the severe financial pressures and need to achieve significant reductions it will become more difficult for the school to sustain these judgements in future inspections.

A further inspection of Cradley High School was recently conducted on 8 December 2006. The letter from the inspector notes good progress in the areas identified in the previous inspection for further improvement. No grades were reported. The letter is available in the separate file Secondary School Information.

***10. Where the school provides sixth form education, please provide in relation to the school the information specified in paragraph 2 of***

***the supplementary information pro forma for alterations involving sixth forms***

**RESPONSE**

Not applicable – Sixth form education is not provided at Cradley High School

**Supplementary Information and**  
**Response to Objections to**  
**Proposals to discontinue Cradley**  
**High School**

## **1. PROPOSALS TO CLOSE CRADLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

### **1.1. It is proposed:**

#### **To discontinue Cradley High School, Homer Hill, Halesowen B63 2UP**

- 1.2 The fall in demand for pupil places is having a significant and adverse impact on Cradley High School's budget. The 2006/7 forecast shows a deficit of £120k on the delegated budget plus £74k on the Leisure and Adult Education budget. This deficit of £194k combined with a 2007/8 budget with around £300k less represents a funding gap in 2007/8 of around £494k. The school no longer has the level of funding required to sustain the quality of education that children are entitled to. The actions required to reduce costs in line with the budget will inevitably lead to a reduction in the quality of educational provision, increase in the staff workload and lower standards achieved by children. This is unacceptable.
- 1.3 The proposal to discontinue Cradley High School is being made following consultation with governors, staff, parents and pupils.
- 1.4 Current Years 10 and 11 are not affected by this proposal. Year 11 will leave as normal in July 2007 and Year 10 will continue at the school through to Year 11 until they leave in July 2008. The proposal requires current pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to transfer to alternative schools by September 2007.
- 1.5 It is proposed that pupils will transfer to a range of local secondary schools. Each pupil and parent will be supported by the Directorate of Children's Services to meet their specific needs. Advice will be provided on the availability of places and the range of opportunities available in alternative schools. Arrangements are in place for parents to visit alternative schools (subject to School Organisation Committee decision).
- 1.6 Parents have been requested to express initial preferences for alternative schools to allow maximum time for parents to make informed choices and ensure transfer processes are fully supported. The provisional timetable for working with parents, pupils and schools is detailed on page 19. Subject to School Organisation Committee approval of the proposal all Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils and parents will be

supported throughout the transfer process or during their remaining time at the school (Years 10 and 11).

1.7 There are already sufficient places in Dudley secondary schools to accommodate the 231 pupils (Years 7, 8 and 9 January 2007) by September 2007. The Authority will continue to work closely with parents, alternative schools and relevant support services to manage the transfer of pupils smoothly and effectively. It is expected that siblings will transfer to the same alternative schools.

1.8 Currently, a few local schools have few or no places whilst others have sufficient places to meet likely demand. Discussions with all of the nearest schools are taking place to ensure that more places are created by September 2007 for pupils currently attending Cradley High. This will increase potential for first preferences and reduce travel requirements. Subject to School Organisation Committee approval of the proposals the Council will exercise its powers in collaboration with local secondary schools to admit pupils over the published admission number to ensure more places are created in local schools. Significant resource from existing budgets e.g. Cradley High School budget will be used where necessary. Discussions continue to take place with

Earls High School	Hillcrest School & Community College
Leasowes Community College	Redhill School
Pedmore Technology College and Community School	
Thorns Community College	Windsor High School

1.9 All of these schools offer a quality of education at least as good as Cradley and all are sustainable.

1.10 In February 2007 Schools Forum will consider a range of financial measures to support parents and schools affected should School Organisation Committee approve the proposals. These measures include contribution towards the cost of meeting uniform policy at the alternative school. Transport arrangements will be in accordance with existing Council policy. All current pupils live within three miles of alternative secondary schools. It is not expected that any would qualify for transport support.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Dudley has managed numerous changes to the pattern of schooling at critical points over the last 60 years. Political, educational and demographic changes have led to changes in school size, new schools and school closures. Dudley is once more faced with new pressures and, with the benefit of much better information systems, can respond to meet the needs of children and young people for the next 20 – 30 years.
- 2.2 Annual birth rates (using academic year September - March) in Dudley have fallen from 4,116 in 1990 to 3,344 in 2003, a fall of almost 20% in 13 years. There was a slight increase to 3,514 in 2004 but long-term projections by the Office of National Statistics indicate the live birth rate settling at around 3,300. As pupil numbers fall the level of government grant to Dudley reduces and there is less to distribute to school budgets whilst costs continue to rise. Schools cannot balance their budgets without cutting back in key areas such as staffing and increased risk to the quality of education and standards achieved. This is not acceptable.
- 2.3 The 20% fall in annual birth rate means fewer pupils moving through primary schools. The fall in demand for places is now evident in the number of applications to secondary schools. There are fewer children leaving primary schools each year resulting in a lower demand for secondary school places in the Borough. Cradley High School has been affected more than any other secondary school. There have been successive reductions in the number of pupils wanting places in each of the last five years and is no longer sustainable.
- 2.4 Pupil numbers at Cradley High have declined over the last five years as admission numbers to Year 7 have dropped year on year. By January 2007 the number on roll had fallen to 507 pupils for 750 places (32% unfilled places). There were only 34 first preference applicants for admission to Year 7 in September 2006 and only 19 for September 2007. 141 Year 11 pupils will leave in July 2007. It is expected that there will be around 385 pupils attending in September 2007 with around 49% of places unfilled.
- 2.5 Around 33% of secondary age pupils living in the local area attend Cradley High School. Most attend other Dudley secondary schools. Many of the pupils attending Cradley High School expressed first preference for schools other than Cradley High School.

- 2.6 The school will start the 2007/8 financial year with a funding gap of around £494k. The 2006/7 budget is forecast to be a £120k deficit plus a deficit of £74k in the Leisure and Adult Education budget. The reduction in pupil numbers of around 100 compared with 2006/7 means the 2007/8 school budget will have around £300k less. The actions required to reduce costs to the budget available will result in significant reductions in staffing and an adverse effect on the quality of education and standards. There is no evidence of any potential increase in demand for places at Cradley High School. The school is no longer sustainable.
- 2.7 In previous school organisation changes in Dudley there have been no compulsory redundancies. No compulsory redundancies are anticipated from this proposal. Every effort will be made to support staff in securing alternative posts at other schools within Dudley or to opportunities that exist across the wider council or elsewhere. Given current staff turnover rates in the various job roles within schools, it is expected that all staff who wish to continue employment in other schools will be able to do so.

### **3. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL**

The School Organisation Committee in assessing this proposal should consider the following;

- The Secretary of State's Guidance for Decision Makers on Statutory Proposals;
- The views expressed during the consultation process regarding this proposal particularly from Governors, staff and parents of pupils attending or intending to attend Cradley High School;
- The Borough's School Organisation Plan;
- Equal opportunities, Racial Discrimination, Disability Discrimination and Human Rights Aspects;
- Any other relevant factors concerning these specific proposals.

In addressing these factors this report follows the Secretary of State's Guidance and applies that Guidance where relevant and appropriate.

The objections to this proposal are reproduced as submitted on pages 33 - 66 of this report give a summary of each of the individual objections raised together with the Directorate of Children's Services response. All correspondence arising from the consultation period, representation period and intervening periods will be available to members of the School Organisation Committee.

#### **EFFECT ON STANDARDS AND CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

##### **3.1 Whether the proposals will improve the standards, quality and range and / or diversity of educational provision in the area**

The financial position at Cradley High School will impact severely on the capacity to maintain standards and the quality and range of educational provision. The projected 2006/7 deficit of £120k and deficit of £74k on the Leisure and Adult Education programme will increase the difficulties of the 2007/8 budget with around £300k less. Reducing costs to within budget and closing the funding gap of around £494k will result in significant reductions in staffing and an adverse impact on the quality

and range of educational provision and standards achieved. Further reductions are forecast for 2008/9.

The proposals will enable pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to attend larger schools with greater numbers of well-trained teaching, support and administrative staff. A higher number of staff can provide a broader range of professional expertise and support a wider range of activities within school and as the extended provision.

Educational provision at alternative secondary schools is at least as good as at Cradley. The table below shows the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C passes including English and mathematics. Cradley High (31% compared with the Dudley average of 43%) is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 secondary schools. All of the nearest local schools achieved higher percentages.

#### **GCSE Results 2006 including English and mathematics**

School name	5 or more A-C grades including English and Maths	How school ranks by grades in the LEA	Average points score	Value Added Score
Old Swinford Hospital	91%	1	530.0	1020.7
Elmfield Rudolph Steiner School	75%	2	540.9	n/a
Bishop Milner Catholic School	64%	3	408.1	1008.4
Windsor High School	61%	4	433.4	1007.5
The Summerhill School	57%	5	417.5	994.7
The Earls High School	56%	6	393.5	998.3
Redhill School and Specialist Language College	55%	7	434.1	1005.4
The High Arcal School	53%	8	363.3	1018.0
Ridgewood High School	47%	9	382.7	980.3
The Kingswinford School	45%	10	399.8	998.0
Thorns Community College	45%	11	348.8	1014.3
Leasowes Community College	43%	12	393.4	996.3
The Dormston School	41%	13	376.9	1019.4
Pedmore Technology College and Community School	40%	14	320.8	986.1
Ellowes Hall Sports College	39%	15	368.5	1001.8
The Crestwood School	39%	16	323.2	992.5
The Hillcrest School and Community College	37%	17	338.7	1030.8
<b>Cradley High School</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>381.1</b>	<b>1011.1</b>
Holly Hall Maths and Computing College	31%	19	307.2	994.4
The Coseley School	24%	20	310.6	984.1
Castle High School and Arts College	22%	21	279.0	994.4
The Wordsley School	18%	22	341.3	1022.2
Pensnett School of Technology	15%	23	295.1	1006.2
Stephenson House School	0%	24	54.0	n/a

School profiles for all Dudley secondary schools confirm that Cradley pupils will be able to transfer to alternative schools where the standards, quality and range of educational provision are as good as or better than Cradley High and sustainable. These profiles are available in a separate file for School Organisation Committee and on [www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk](http://www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk).

### **OFSTED headline statements.**

OFSTED reports for Dudley secondary schools are available in a separate file for School Organisation Committee and reports for all schools are available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports).

### **3.2 Whether they advance national and local transformation strategies**

The proposals will enhance national and local transformation strategies. The capacity of Cradley High School to meet the requirements of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is decreasing. The proposals will enable the school to concentrate on maintaining provision for current Year 10 and 11 pupils. Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils will have access in alternative secondary schools with;

- a broader range of well-trained staff in accordance with the National Workforce Strategy;
- a broader range of learning facilities;
- more opportunity for extended provision;
- inclusion of all children;

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 will also benefit from transfer to alternative schools involved in collaborative arrangements such as the Halesowen Pathfinder Trust. Leasowes Community College, Windsor High School, The Earls High School and Halesowen College are working collaboratively on the new suite of diploma courses and other areas. Other combinations of schools and colleges will continue to develop as Dudley prepares for inclusion in the national Building Schools for the Future programme and the Black Country Education and Skills Strategy. These longer term strategies will benefit pupils that are still in primary school or have not yet started statutory education.

### **3.3 The standards of education in existing and proposed alternative provision, and particularly in the case of nursery schools, that the alternative provision will be able to enhance the standards of education provision**

Please see 3.1.

### **3.4 The effect of the proposals on other institutions**

The proposals will increase the capacity of local schools to continue raising standards for all children. This will be achieved by ensuring the value of funding received per child rises due to fewer schools and less money wasted on maintaining surplus places. Funding will also follow each pupil transferring to alternative schools. More of the available resources will be used for educational provision.

### **NEED FOR PLACES**

In assessing the level of need the Guidance directs decision makers to consider;

### **3.5 The overall supply and likely future demand for places.**

Reducing demand for secondary school places is already evident in lower numbers of applications for secondary school places. The forecasts in the table below take account of numbers in primary schools, migration between local authorities and housing developments.

<b>PLASC</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>Surplus places</b>	<b>% surplus places</b>
1997	20,881	18912	1,969	9.4%
1998	20,881	19332	1,549	7.4%
1999	20,881	19606	1,275	6.1%
2000	20,881	19777	1,104	5.3%
2001	20,881	20291	590	2.8%
2002	20,881	20518	363	1.7%
2003	20,881	20708	173	0.8%
2004	20,881	20874	7	0.0%
2005	20,881	20874	7	0.0%
2006	21,305	20754	551	2.6%
2007	21,305	20576	729	3.4%
2008	21,305	20381	924	4.3%
2009	21,305	20127	1,178	5.5%
2010	21,305	19974	1,331	6.2%
2011	21,305	19715	1,590	7.5%

Dudley is a mature area in terms of land use with few opportunities for housing developments. There are no housing developments of sufficient size to increase demand for places at Cradley High School. The remaining schools in Dudley can meet future demand.

**3.6 Whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils in the area**

Please refer to Tables 3, 4 and 5 of the Consultation document attached as **Appendix 1**. There are sufficient places in Dudley secondary schools to accommodate the 231 pupils (Years 7, 8 and 9 January 2007) by September 2007. Discussions are continuing with the nearest local schools to ensure more places are available in all of the local schools. Please see section 7 of prescribed information.

**3.7 Whether the proposals will reduce the proportion of denominational places**

The proposals will have no impact on the proportion of denominational places.

**FINANCE**

In relation to the financial effects of the proposal the Secretary of State's Guidance requires the Committee to consider the following;

**3.8 Whether the proposals represent a cost-effective use of public funds.**

**Revenue funding**

- Table 6 of the Consultation Document attached as **Appendix 1** describes how the financial position of Cradley has changed due to falling pupil numbers.
- 2006/7 the school had the highest cost per pupil in Dudley and was 14% above the secondary average.
- 2007/8 school budget will be based on around 100 fewer pupils compared with 2006/7 resulting in around £300k less.
- The 2006/7 budget outturn is forecasting a deficit of £120k
- The 2006/7 Leisure and Adult Education budget is showing a deficit of £74k

Cradley High will start the 2007/8 financial year with a funding gap of around £494k. The school cannot afford to maintain the educational provision currently offered and the difficulties will continue to increase. The school is no longer sustainable in financial or educational terms.

The proposals will remove the very high cost provision at Cradley High and ensure pupils receive educational provision in well resourced, sustainable schools.

### **Unit Cost Comparison**

The unit cost per pupil at Cradley High for 2006/07 was £4,066 compared with the average unit cost per pupil for the secondary sector of £3,576. This is 14% above the average unit cost and poor value for money. These high revenue costs will increase in 2007/8 and are not sustainable.

### **Reserves**

The projected 2006/7 budget outturn indicates a deficit of £120k plus a deficit of £74k in the Leisure and Adult Education budget. There are no reserves. Please see **Appendix 10**.

### **3.9 Whether the capital resources required are available**

The school will continue to receive devolved capital allocation for 2007/8. It is not expected that there will be any capital costs arising from the creation of additional places at other secondary schools. If any devolved capital allocation remains unspent, it can be used by the Directorate of Children's Services on other priority capital works at schools.

### **3.10 Whether the sale proceeds of redundant sites are to be made available and whether the Secretary of State's consent has been obtained where necessary**

Not applicable. The proposal is not dependent on the proceeds of redundant sites.

### **VIEWS OF INTERESTED PARTIES**

**3.11** Clearly the Committee must have regard to the wide range of views that have been expressed in relation to this proposal.

The consultation document is attached as **Appendix 1** and the consultation report is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Copies of all correspondence are included in separate files as a record of how responses have been considered.

### **Representation Period**

During the representation period (24 November 2006 to 5 January 2007), 10 letters of objection were received by the Directorate of Children's Services, all in opposition to closure, setting out reasons and asking further questions.

These letters were logged according to recipient details and acknowledged by the Directorate. Each letter is replicated in full from page 38 along with the response of the Directorate of Children's Services in accordance with Statutory Guidance. Copies of the original letters are also available in the separate file provided.

#### **3.12 The views of any Local Education Authority affected by the proposals or with an interest**

There have been no responses from neighbouring Local Education Authorities.

#### **3.13 The views of other schools and colleges in the area**

There have been no responses from other schools and colleges in the area.

#### **3.14 The views of the Learning and Skills Council (if the proposal affect the provision of post-16 education)**

No views have been received. The proposals do not affect the provision of post-16 education.

#### **3.15 The views of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership**

Not applicable. The proposals do not affect early years or childcare

provision.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

The Guidance identifies a number of further aspects to be considered and it must be recognised that the Committee must consider this proposal on its own merits.

### **3.16 The length and nature of journeys to alternative provision**

Analysis of home addresses shows that no current Cradley pupils live more than 3 miles from at least one alternative secondary school. Many pupils live closer to alternative schools than to Cradley High. It is not expected that there will be any significant increase in the distance to alternative schools. No pupils are expected to qualify for transport support. Large maps are available to School Organisation Committee.

### **3.17 Any sex, race or disability discrimination issues or other human rights issues**

The Council has appropriate policies in place and is committed to compliance with the law in relation to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in respect of all of its schools.

The Council supports a highly inclusive policy in its schools and is striving to upgrade the facilities wherever possible with the aim of having as many fully accessible schools as possible in order to satisfy local need. However, this is easier in some cases than others and the capital funding for improving disability access in schools is limited. All of the school buildings in the local area have been surveyed by the Special Educational Needs Team to assess requirements to bring them up to full accessibility.

Many of the schools on the list have a high degree of wheelchair accessibility within the building, i.e. teaching areas, toilets and other areas accessed by children, making them more suitable for disabled pupils. The Directorate of Children's Services would therefore recommend those schools to parents of disabled children (requiring the use of a wheelchair or other mobility aids). In addition, many of the alternative schools have better access to the building itself, making them more suitable for disabled access to public areas and the school in

general.

### Human Rights

Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) provides that:-

*"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the rights of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions".*

The United Kingdom has a reservation to this Article which reads:-

*"...the principle affirmed in the second sentence of Protocol 1, Article 2 is accepted by the United Kingdom only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure".*

Article 2 leaves the structure and funding of public education to the state's discretion. Similarly it does not prescribe the content or purpose of the education that is to be provided and nor does it guarantee access to a particular educational institution or standard of education.

Furthermore, the Convention right to education is not fixed in content but takes the form of the provision made by each member state. The proposal will not bring about a denial of access to education provided for in the statute law of England and Wales.

### Individual Cases

Whilst it is the Education Authority's position that there are no discrimination or human rights issues which are of such significance as to call into question this proposal, it is accepted that the effect of the proposal could cause specific individual hardship or difficulties and the Council is committed to addressing each such situation on its own merits.

### **3.18 Whether the change will affect the ability to meet the minimum statutory requirements for provision of school playing fields**

The proposals will have no impact on the current provision of school playing fields.

**3.19 The effect of the proposal on infant class sizes**

Not applicable.

**3.20 The overall effect of a closure on the local community, particularly in areas receiving funding as part of regeneration activity**

It is not in the interests of any community to be served by a school which is financially and educationally unsustainable. If the proposal to discontinue Cradley High School is taken by School Organisation Committee further discussions would take place regarding options for maintaining existing leisure and adult education provision.

**3.21 Whether the proposals are in connection with the establishment of an Academy**

The proposals are not connected with the establishment of an Academy.

**3.22 Additional factors if the school is on special measures**

Not applicable.

**3.23 Rural schools and sites**

Not applicable.

**3.24 Closure of maintained nursery schools**

Not applicable.

**STANDARD OF ACCOMMODATION AND CONDITION OF FACILITIES**

**3.25** Please refer to prescribed information.

#### **4. LETTERS OF OBJECTION AND THE DIRECTORATE'S RESPONSE**

**All 10 letters of objection are copied below as submitted. Individual points of objection are numbered and refer to the Directorate of Children's Service's responses on pages 71 - 84. FOR COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL LETTERS PLEASE SEE THE CORRESPONDENCE FILE PROVIDED.**

##### Objection 1

Further to telephone conversation today, this e-mail I am sending to you is my objection to its closure. I list the following points in my objection as follows: Cradley High School has had excellent GCSE results and I believe it offers first class education. Its pass rate this year was second to Oldswinford Hospital School. It is my opinion that a school with these results should not be closed. **1**

It is my opinion that not all aspects have been considered with the childrens welfare and safety if closure goes ahead i.e. children in the nearby vicinity will have to travel on public transport at early hours in the morning. I believe it is a human right that children should be able to walk to a local school. All other dudley mbc schools are too far for children aged 11+ to walk to safely. **2**

It is my belief that making children leave early hours in the morning especially dark and/or/with snow or rain and excess cold conditions and adding on the return journey time, less time to study etc goes beyond their human rights. Making children cross unsafe busy roads to get to a main bus route especially down lonely side streets is not taking into consideration childrens welfare. If school buses are provided it would have to travel all down the side rides of Cradley. **3**

Although travel allowances are being negotiated for the childrens travel expenses, this will not be a permanent arrangement as per the comments verbally stated by Mr. Watson at the Special Schools meeting in September, 2006. This would have a long term adverse financial effect on families especially those with more than one child. Some parents in the Cradley vicinity have 2, 3 and many as 4, 5 or 6 children. With three High School children having to travel at 60p per journey this would cost £1.80 per journey (£3.60 return) which amounts to £18.00 per week. Although some families are on income support etc and may be able to get support, the families who are not eligible for this would greatly suffer. Their weekly child allowance goes towards food and clothes and shoes for their

children. Where is this additional expense going to come from? **3**

It is my opinion that the way in which the consultation process has been carried out is not satisfactory. It is apparent that there has been lack of communication with parents and children in many forms. Infact the way in which it has been handled, in my opinion, is diabolical. Even up to the last minute issuing the Statutory Notice on the 23rd November and even printing it incorrectly and then having to reprint it the next day again in local press with apologies does not give much faith to the parents/carers of Cradley High children. This again, in my opinion, only adds even more events to be looked into carefully by higher powers of authority. **4**

Issuing the notice on this day only leaves about three weeks before Christmas holidays etc. Such untimely events like this does not leave much to the imagination. Infact it is not dissimilar to the events just before the Summer School Holidays. **5**

Alternatives to closure, in my opinion, have not been fully considered ie there is a specific website issued by the Government to deal with falling rolls. It would appear that the guidelines have not been fully taken into account. What about mergers of schools. Management of two schools by one Head Teacher etc. these are only just a couple of ideas that come to mind. **6**

Also leadership of a school should be taken into great consideration. Parents put there trust in a schools Governing Body and Head Teacher. It is both these positions' duty to ensure a school is maintained in all aspects. **7**

The consultation to close Cradley High and now the decision to issue the Statutory Notice is based soley on falling numbers. It would appear that during the course of events other facts have been brought into the situation. Now that these other facts have arisen and brought into it surely they should form part of the overall picture. **8**

It is my opinion that the Special Education Needs situation should be more carefully looked into before closure is considered. The figures supplied by Mr. Watson in recent correspondence being listed as a small number. When calculated as a percentage rate paints a different picture. **9**

## Objection 2

So, Dudley MBC again is intent on closing another school, this time it is Cradley High School. Again I find myself involved as my nephew John

attends this school. His siblings would also attend in a few years time so feel I must respond accordingly.

This school although smaller than some other schools has improved itself year on year, this year in fact it was second to Oldswinford Hospital School with a staggering 73 %. **1**

The pupil with Special Education Needs accounts for some 50 % of the total on roll, can you honestly provide them with the same education and support at the other local schools? These other local schools i.e. Windsor and Earls, my nephew was turned down and is now getting wonderful support and education at Cradley High. **9**

These children have often been together through Primary School into High school and now will be separated and face long journeys to and from school. They may be members of school clubs and sports teams, they have built relationships and friendships. **2, 10**

I understand from one child who has already left to attend Pedmore, that he has to leave home at 7am, he walks for 20 minutes to the bus stop in order to get on a bus that stops (most of them at that time are full with commuters, and pass on by), he gets off at Lye, then endures a walk up to the school in order to arrive at school in time. **2**

Why choose Cradley High, there are other Dudley Schools with similar numbers Pensnett, Holly Hall and Bishop Milner? **11**

I notice that you had misrepresented the Oldswinford figures in the consultation document and have now included this on your website, **12**  
I believe you also failed to offer this document to the Yemeni community in a language they can understand. The Yemeni community is prominent in the Cradley area; this again may divide a community. **13**

The community utilize Cradley High for many different activities, have you therefore consulted the community? **14**

Again you state, discussions are taking place to ensure that sufficient places are created in other schools, why after the debacle of a primary school review have you not done this first. **15**

How do they feel about this? Do they have sufficient capacity? Have they been consulted? **15**

Do their opinions count? **16**

You have stated that the "number on roll will fall to around 370 by September 2009". This is "based on continued intakes of around 69 pupils". This is the lowest figure in the series; the next page shows a cyclical trend between 1997 and 2006. The total number in the school rose from 619 in 1997, peaked at 769 in 2002, and has fallen to 607 in 2006. If the pattern is cyclical, might you not expect the number to start rising again at some point in the future? **17**

You mention in the consultation document about the number of staff at Cradley High, may I ask if the staff ratio is high due to the SEN factor? **18**

Were any other initiatives tried and tested prior to closure, amalgamation, federating Schools, reductions in capacity? **19**

Did you take on board comments made from the Schools adjudicator after his decision to keep Beauty Bank open, and indeed the comments from the SOC after the meetings for Sycamore Green, Highfields and Holt Farm? **20, 41**

The mess at Beauty Bank was reported daily in the newspapers, parents being provided with bus passes to trek the kids every day on two bus rides. Parents were not in receipt of their 'grant' for the new uniforms.

I myself struggled to get the money from yourselves after you closed Holt Farm. Having to get many parties involved in my fight. **21**

It still leaves me thinking, that you indeed hope parents will move their children in the middle of this consultation, as they indeed did with the Primary School Review, because people do panic and worry about their children's schooling.

AFTER ALL PUTTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FIRST IS WHAT PARENTS DO.

I strongly object to you closing Cradley High.

Please acknowledge receipt of this objection.

### Objection 3

I am writing this letter in hope that it will help you see that Cradley High should

remain open, both for the pupils and the community surrounding Cradley. At the moment I have two children that attend Cradley High. Both my children are doing well at Cradley **22** they are very upset at the thought that they may have to change schools; they both chose this school because it is a small more personal school and it is within walking distance of our house. If they have to change schools where are they going to go, the only school within walking distance has no room for them **2,15**. My youngest child is in his first year at Cradley, he is the only boy who came to Cradley from his primary school [Dudley Wood] along with two girls, the rumours that Cradley may close have been around for a few years, last year they were stronger than ever and that is one of the main reasons that others did not choose to send their children to Cradley. I was encouraged to send both my children to Cradley and I chose to ignore these rumours and trusted my judgement. I am very upset along with the rest of my family, who have all attended Cradley High /Homer Hill at some point during the time that there has been a school on Homer Hill. I am hoping/that the younger members of my family will get to go there too.

There are parents and children that feel very let down by what is happening and will fight the closure.

I am one of them. Please give us a chance. Some have formed a PTA and are hoping to raise the profile of the school, if parents knew how good this school is they might choose to give it a chance. **23**

The exam results of Cradley pupils ARE among the best in the borough **1**  
THIS SCHOOL DOES NOT DESERVE TO CLOSE.

#### Objection 4

I am a very angry parent objecting to the closure of Cradley High. All of my children have attended that school and have done really well. I have an 8 year old daughter at Cradley C of E Primary School that really wants to go to Cradley High. **23** I will not allow her to go to any of the schools listed on the public notice. There is no need for this fuss about closing Cradley High this could have all been avoided. This school can be saved there are enough people trying their hardest to keep it going. Why not close Windsor? **24** I have got friends that have sent their children there, they have been bullied, also it is a well known fact they do drugs there, **25** I know because my friends have told me and they said they wished they had never sent their children to that school. I have a friend that sent 2 of her 3 children to Windsor she has told me she doesn't want her youngest to go there, she wants him to go to Cradley High. I only live 10 minutes away from Cradley High, no need to set out early in a morning or need to catch buses that hardly ever turn up. **2, 15**

This could have been avoided also by not letting children ready to leave primary school have the choice of about 6 schools. Years ago you had to go to your nearest high school and it should be like that now. **26** You can save this school but you have all made up your minds, I will fight to save it just like all of the others. Why don't you pick on other high schools? There are 3 in Halesowen, 2 or 3 in Stourbridge, what do they need more for? Cradley has only got 1 and we want it to stay. I also no a few women that have got older children at Cradley High and younger children at Cradley C of E, well because the parents work the older children have to collect the younger ones. **27** What's going to happen if it closes? Well I'm saying it again I OBJECT to Cradley High closing. Why don't you all have a meeting to discuss how you can save the school? You are all supposed to care about the children, well you can't care about them enough by saying the school may close. There are ways of saving the school, now I think it's time you all came up with something, I don't mean close the school either. There are enough pupils attending to keep it going. Also don't you think they deserve to have it kept open after the brilliant summer exam results? I don't remember reading about the other high schools on you public notice list doing that well. **1**

#### Objection 5

I am writing to you concerning the closure of Cradley High School, My son Shaun goes to that school and by closing it down you are going to set my son back by maybe 1-2 years. **28**

He went to Cradley High because the school he was supposed to go to had 2 boys there who had assaulted him in the last year of his primary school, and we took the case to court to prosecute and it was felt that he would not be safe to go to the same school they were.

He started out doing well the first term and they moved him into a higher class when he went back for the next term, but by moving him without telling him why knocked his confidence and made him feel insecure within himself and he started to play up and get into a bit of trouble.

His dad spent a lot of time at the school sorting with the help of the teachers how we could help him do better, which by the end of the year we had got him settled and he was doing a lot better.

Then we found out that he has ADHD and he needed help with dealing with that and the medication he was taking, and also he was going to see councillors.

The school was very helpful and mapped out a plan to help him and he was really doing well.

He was at school one day when his ear started to bleed and we took him to the doctors and found he had an ear infection, he was given antibiotics to

clear up the infection but he was still having trouble, so he was sent to the hospital to see a specialist to find out why he was getting more infections and they found out that he has a disease that is eating away at the bones in his ear.

The school has been very helpful with all the time he has had for his visits to the hospital for both his ADHD and his ear, by setting special help for him to catch up with his work and help when he is in class as from the hearing tests he's had they think that there's a chance that he has lost his hearing in his left ear.

He is due to go for an hearing test where they use electrodes to find if he has any or no hearing in his ear.

Then he will be going into hospital for 2 mastoid operations. The school has been working at keeping his spirits up as he is frightened and scared of what is to come.

When he found out that the school might be closing it knocked him for six as he has grown to love going to Cradley High and does not want to go to another school and start all over again, plus another school would not help him the way the teachers at Cradley do. **28**

We have a younger daughter who started at a different school and on the off chance we enquired about if Cradley closed down would there be a place for Shaun and would they have the same Help that Cradley gives Shaun with his problems. As soon as we told them what his problems were they said that if he'd had any trouble and his stats were below a certain level then probably not and that maybe there wouldn't be any places anyway. **15, 28**

With all this going on with Shaun and the threat of closure of the school it's got him so worked up that he told a teacher that he would rather be dead than have to go to another school, and anyway he wasn't going to another school at all he'd stop at home.

He upset that teacher so much that she told the head of house and he phoned me and told us. He also had a talk to Shaun and tried to calm him down but it's playing on his mind with everything else. He has started to see the councillor at the school to help him try to deal with everything.

He would only have the last year to go if the school closed down in 2008.

If he went to another school I don't think that he would have the help he gets now nor would the school understand what is needed to help him, because there would be a lot more pupils in the class than is in the class he is in now and he wouldn't have the attention to help him because the teacher would be divided between too many pupils. **28, 29**

We don't want the school to close down and we are hoping that it won't not just for my son's sake but for other pupils as well.

### Objection 6

Cradley Action Group came together in the first weeks following the announcement that Dudley Council proposed to close Cradley High School. The Group is made up of parents, teachers, staff, residents, local Councillors and Children. Our reason for forming the group is to fight against the closure of the School as we believe this will have a disastrous effect on our children and the generations of children that will follow.

We have very limited experience and we describe ourselves as willing amateurs, however we do believe we represent the views of the majority of the people of Cradley and the surrounding area. Our belief is founded on the tremendous public support we have had over the past six months, with, literally, hundreds of people attending the various public meetings that either we or the Council have organised. **30**

The document we have attached is our formal objection to the decision to apply a statutory notice of closure on Cradley High School. We ask that you read this in conjunction with the other papers you will have and bear in mind that these are the doubts, questions and solutions of local people, local people who this decision will affect more than anyone else.

Why Close The School?

The LEA argument to close Cradley High is based on one argument, that the school has insufficient pupils to be viable. Because of this there will be insufficient funding to keep the school going.

Looking back over the past 18 months there have been a number of proposals to close local schools not only in Dudley but also in Boroughs all over the Country. All or most of these closures have taken place because the number of children in the 'catchment' areas of those schools has fallen below the critical level needed.

For Cradley High this is not the case, there are sufficient numbers of children within its catchment area to fill the places available. What is happening is that for some reason those children or their parents do not choose Cradley High.

To expand on the numbers available in the catchment area. Within reasonable walking distance – less than a mile - we have the following primary schools with the associated proposed admissions number:

Primary school	Proposed admissions number (PAN)
Caslon	30
Cradley C.E.	30
Colley Lane	75
Wollescote	60
Huntingtree	45
Dudley Wood	60

These are the Dudley Primary schools; a proportion of Cradley High pupils come from Sandwell and the following schools are within a mile of Cradley High all with PANs of approximately 30

Corngreaves  
Old Hill  
Timbertree

This is not exhaustive however we believe this helps to illustrate that there are more than enough potential pupils within one mile of Cradley High, in fact if all 390 wished to use the school it would have to double in size. The question is therefore, why aren't they coming? **26, 31**

How Do We Get More Children?

Of all the questions raised by many people during the consultation period, 'why do children not go to Cradley High?' is the most pertinent. The answers given are also the most frustrating.

One of the LEA's replies given at a public meeting was:

Q. Shouldn't you have encouraged people from local primary schools to come? Are you saying it's our fault the schools is closing?

A. Everyone is an ambassador in different ways for every school. It is a pity more children do not come to the school. If all the local children come here we wouldn't be here tonight. The fall in pupil numbers and the impact it could have on the school did not come as a surprise to the Governing Body as they have known about this for a while. They also need to promote the school. We have done many things to help but cannot promote one school over another, this is up to the school.

When pressed the LEA, actually John Freeman, stated that it was not the responsibility of the LEA to do anything in this situation as it was totally the governors and head teachers responsibility. He also added that local people and councillors should also shoulder this responsibility. **32**

Since the end of the consultation period we have learnt from the governors and staff that the LEA actually had been in discussion with the school about its lowered numbers. However the LEA and again in this case John Freeman advised the school that he was much more interested in the school increasing its performance and that if it did so then he was not concerned with the numbers. **1, 32**

The actual quote we have been given is that Mr Freeman said “If you get good results the school will be safe”. Mr Freeman had given the Head and all of the staff a massive incentive to achieve good results which the school went on to achieve, everyone feels as though they have been stabbed in the back. **1, 33**

In many ways increasing achievement is a common sense approach, after all the main attraction for a school should be the level of education it achieves. However hand in hand with achievement is telling people that you are achieving.

The school has gone from strength to strength over the past years, its achievement this year in the 5 GCSEs outstripping any other LEA school in the Borough. **1** It has done this with over 50% of the pupils in Special educational needs and with many having English as a second language. **33**

Yet Cradley High was not lauded by the Cabinet Member Cllr. Walker **32**

In fact the following press release:

GCSE results up by around 3.5 per cent  
Pupils, parents and teachers in Dudley are celebrating after it emerged today's (Thur) GCSE results are up on last year.

Early indications suggest that around 57 per cent of borough youngsters achieved at least five A\* to C grades. This is a 3.5 per cent increase on last year's borough results.

Councillor Liz Walker, cabinet member for children's services, said:

"I would like to offer my congratulations to all the pupils who have received their GCSE results today. Early indications show that the hard work of pupils and school staff has paid off and we are all delighted with the prospective rise of 3.5 per cent.

"All of our schools, the pupils, staff and parents together with the local authority will of course continue to work in the successful partnership with each other to build upon this year's results."

The Coseley School's results showed a huge increase from 28 per cent up to 42 per cent while Ridgewood moved up from 62 per cent to 66 and Pedmore Technology College rose from 43 per cent to 48.

Release Date: 24 August 2006  
Directorate: Education and Lifelong Learning

was then followed by a number of press statements mentioning other schools but never Cradley High.

It would be wrong to totally blame the LEA, it has to be said that we have never seen anything from the school praising itself for all that it does achieve.

**32**

Whilst external publicity has not been a feature, more worrying has been what appears to have been a concerted policy not to take Cradley High out to the schools within its catchment area. During the past months members of the action group have visited all of the primary schools and at each they have seen examples of literature and posters from other secondary schools but never Cradley. Further questioning of the heads of some of these schools showed that there had been considerable integration and interaction with those same secondary schools but not with Cradley High. **32, 33**

Finally during the public meetings some members of the audience advised that the LEA admissions section had advised parents that Cradley was closing. Despite assurances from Ray Watson that this should not have happened it continued. We have been advised that this was also the case for Maidensbridge School during its consultation period. **34**

These same points were raised at public meetings and received responses from the LEA as follows:

Q. The shortage in pupils now stems from primary schools. Many 10 and 11

year olds are being told not to come here because they are clever. Negative comments like this does not help Cradley High School attract pupils.

A. Investigations will take place into this matter. The school has worked with local primary schools to ensure there is an understanding but we will look into comments.

Q. For example a Year 6 child at Colley Lane told her primary school teacher that she was moving up to Cradley High School and the teacher's response was 'what a shame'. Most local primary schools work with Windsor, why can't they work with Cradley?

A. We do recognise what you are saying. It is not acceptable for a teacher in a primary school to make such comments. We will raise the matter with primary schools.

Q. I am a concerned parent because I live in Sandwell but I don't want to send my child to Heathfield. When my children were at primary school everything was geared for children to move to Thorns, there was no representation from Cradley High. We were given the impression that this school was purely an overflow school.

A. Comment noted.

Q. My child only started at this school today, they couldn't get in because of administration. We were told there were no places here because Cradley High School was closing down.

A. We are disappointed to hear this, as you should not have been told that. Staff do have to advise the parents of the situation as it would be unfair not to but should not say there are no places. Please provide the details and we will investigate. **32, 34**

(all references shown in red are taken from the consultation questions and answers on the Council website) [*Please see correspondence file for coloured copy*]

## Increasing The Numbers

Much of the work that the action group has undertaken over the past months has been to raise awareness and to attempt to increase interest in the school. We believe that we have been successful, in fact far more successful than the LEA would lead us to believe.

We have had two packed public meetings at the school, with a further meeting attracting about 60 people. Large numbers attended the Area Committee meetings even though they left terribly disappointed with the outcomes and lack of organisation.

We decided that we would go out to local primary schools, talk to parents and get them to sign a simple form asking for more information about the school. We were stunned by the response with some 269 people signing the forms. All of this from a small sample of parents simply by talking to them as they went to pick up their children from the school. Imagine our disappointment when our efforts were rubbished by the LEA and certain Councillors, particularly those whose constituents had signed the forms.

Cllr Walker then set us a target of getting 150 children signed up to the 2007 intake, while we knew that this was a daunting figure we went out to about 200 of those who had signed our forms. We did this on one Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, 16 of our group knocked on 200 doors, we had 94 signed letters of intent which we presented to Cllr Walker. These did not all relate to the 2007 intake but it showed that there is tremendous interest, despite all of those parents knowing that the school is under threat of closure.

So much with so little resource yet this was more than had been done by the professionals over the past years. **30, 31**

#### Communications and Consultation

From the outset communication has been poor, we first heard about the proposals through the local press who had been told before any of the parents or children. The first meeting arranged by the LEA was not advised to all parents and those of us who did receive notification only had it two days prior to the meeting. **36**

For our parents in the Yemeni community they have had to rely on someone translating the English versions of all of the papers to them as the only translations made available were at the special Area committee meeting. This was only a shortened version of the documentation. When asked about this and why, despite repeated requests for all documents in the appropriate language they had not been made available Mr Watson stated that the council could not legally provide such documentation. This despite he and Mr Freeman earlier assuring us that full translations would be done. We believe

that this resulted in many of the Yemeni community being excluded from the consultation.

Q. The languages in the consultation papers did not include Arabic even though you were aware of the Yemeni community at the school. Why were the correct translations not provided?

A. We give our sincere apologies for this. An Arabic translation was requested and we didn't spot that it hadn't been provided. Further translations will be available on request and a specific meeting can be arranged if required. **37**

We were deeply disappointed that the special Area committee was cut short by the Chair even though all in the hall including the committee were prepared to carry on to ensure all questions were heard. **38**

Cllr Walker did at least take heed of our concerns about the lack of consultation and we thank her for attending one of our committee meetings and a subsequent public meeting.

There are a large number of questions that are shown on the consultation website that remain unanswered, the Schools Organisation Committee will have copies of these in their bundles and we hope that they get better answers to these and their own questions than those that have been given to our community.

We cannot fail to mention the Head Mrs Fowler, she has lead the team of teachers that is providing an excellent level of education for our children. We believe she should have been able to lend her voice to our campaign. We have asked her why she hasn't publicly spoken out and she has told us that she could not speak out against her employers and that she has signed documentation to that effect. **7**

If this is indeed the case Dudley LEA is effectively gagging the head teacher. **39**

Dudley is currently conducting a full review of Secondary provision throughout Dudley, the timescale for this review effectively mirrored the initial consultation period for Cradley High. At no time has anyone given a logical reason why the future role of Cradley High was not considered as part of this consultation. We hope the SOC will get a clear answer that stands examination. **40**

Finally we wish to put on record our deep concerns about the timing of this

consultation. Each of the periods of consultation have been over major holiday periods which has reduced the input from teachers, staff and pupils. We believe this timing was deliberate and politically motivated following earlier closure attempts which have been embarrassing to the Council. **41**

It has also unnecessarily increased the worry and concerns for all involved as it reduced the ability for peer support not just for staff but for pupils and parents and left whole months where there was no immediate source of information or help.

## The Future

At the moment pupils at Cradley High, in common with their peers at all other secondary schools, walk to school. In fact the proportion that arrives by car is, we believe, less than for many other schools.

If Cradley High is closed then current and all future generations of our children will not have the realistic option of walking to school. We have been told that some of the schools that may take our children are within the statutory distance, this may well be the case, however none of them are within walking distance. Pedmore Technology College is about 2 kilometres away as the crow flies. This translates to a much greater distance some 4 kilometres by road (bus route).

We have chosen Pedmore as it is the only school that has places available, every one of the other schools within the statutory distance is oversubscribed. However the journey to the school is horrendous by public transport involving at least one change of bus and along one of the busiest roads in the borough, incidentally one of the most polluted roads as well. **2, 15**

In an affluent area this may not be seen as a hardship however car ownership in Cradley is much lower than the national average and that for the rest of Dudley. This will mean that public transport will be the main viable option. For many of our children this will mean significantly increased travelling – one of the parents in the Action Group has a child at Pedmore and he has to start off at 7.30 in the morning to arrive on time at Pedmore. Is this a reasonable future for our children?

School choice is seen by all as one of the most important decisions for our children. Closure of Cradley High leaves a gaping hole in the choice available particularly to those on limited means. The nearest school, Windsor High is heavily oversubscribed and all other schools are as we have said a long way

away. **2, 15**

Cradley is undergoing a fundamental transformation, it has been identified, in the last few months, as an area that needs significant regeneration. Over the last few years heavy industrial areas within one mile of the school have closed and are about to become high density housing estates. These include: Clanceys in Belle Vale, Henleys foundry in Cradley as well as the possibility of the Clanceys site in Netherend. A huge area opposite Cradley Heath station is also due for housing development. Henleys will have some 300 homes and Clanceys could be a considerably larger site.

The LEA have not taken account of these developments as well as a myriad of smaller developments. They do acknowledge 81 new homes in Cradley and 113 in Dudley Wood Road yet they state that this will make little if any difference to school numbers in the future. What they have not done is to further represent or show that they have analysed in any detail the actual birth rates or expectations for Cradley. **42**

One of the drivers for development of such housing estates is the proximity of local services – taking out our only Secondary school may have a significant effect on both the regeneration of Cradley and the future success of such developments.

Both Mr Freeman and Mr Watson assured parents that they would be approached to see what schools they would prefer their children to go to if the school was closed.

The consultation document states:

During the consultation parents will be asked to give an initial indication of preferences for alternative schools. This will ensure that sufficient places are created in the relevant schools. Parents will be asked to confirm their preferences when a decision is taken about the future of Cradley High.

To date this has not happened and in fact meetings are to take place over the coming weeks. We have had numerous parents expressing their deep concerns and anger as they believe this has tremendously shortened the period over which the LEA can make considered decisions about current pupils futures. The consultation should have taken place at the start of the Autumn Term which would have allowed an extra 3 months for what will inevitably be a difficult process. **2, 10, 15, 43**

## The community

Cradley is a diverse community in all senses of the word, we have areas of deprivation and wealth, we have a large Yemeni community and down the road a large community of people from Pakistan. The school provides an education to this mixed community, that we believe is second to none in Dudley. We have up to 50% of our children with some form of special educational need, many have English as a second language, how will they cope in large impersonal schools adrift from other members of their community? **9, 44**

Attached to our submission is an argument from the teachers who are involved in the special educational needs teaching (appendix 1). They do a magnificent job and are rightly deeply worried that the work they have done with so many children will not continue. We have also attached a deeply moving letter from a parent of a child with huge problems which we hope you read. (appendix 2) **9, 44**

Whilst we do have a mixed community racist incidents within and without the School are minimal and far better than at neighbouring schools. This is also true about those in our school with disabilities or learning difficulties, they are treated compassionately by their peers and the incidence of bullying in the school is low.

There have been difficulties with some children from the school in our community. This is the case at all schools, Cradley High has been in partnership with Barnardos, Connexions, Youth services and the Police over the past two years. Marked improvements in behaviour have been seen both inside school and in the community as a whole.

Many of the incidents around the area of the school involving antisocial behaviour involve children from outside the Cradley area and almost exclusively involve children from other schools. We believe that this is improving and that the focus of improvement has been the work undertaken by these agencies. How will this carry on if the school is closed?

One part of the school that is lacking is that it has no parent teacher association. This has been identified as a priority area by the campaign group and a fledgling committee has now been set up. We believe that this will not only provide genuine help and support to pupil and teachers, but it will also see its role as championing the school and attracting new pupils. **32**

The other element that needs increased community support and involvement is the leisure centre attached to the school. This used to be a much used facility with pupils organising many of the after school activities. While it is still well used it could be so much better. **45**

## Conclusion

We could have added a lot more to this objection document that would have summarised many of the other papers that should form a part of the SOC documents.

We believe that we have shown that there is hope for our School, if we could get over 250 parents interested then we are certain that with concerted effort by the School, the Parents, The Pupils and the LEA we will be able to attract sufficient children to our School.

We believe this is totally preferential to adding accommodation to other schools and subjecting the children of Cradley, for the foreseeable future and beyond, to horrendous journeys.

We believe that the threat to our school has united our community and will ensure a vibrant commitment by the community to the school.

We believe that the option to close any school should be a last option yet there is no documentation available showing what, if any, other options were explored by the LEA. We have asked but Mr Freeman says there is nothing written down.

We believe that our children's education will suffer if they are forced to move, we have this belief because no-one can tell us which school will take our children.

We believe that the School has done all and more that has been asked of it in terms of educational success by Council Officers. Our understanding is that an OFSTED report undertaken prior to Christmas will only serve to show that this School has something to offer to other Schools in our Borough particularly in relation to its work with disadvantaged children.

We ask this of the Schools Organisation Committee – Give Cradley High a chance we are sure it will not let you down.

## Appendix 1

### Questions unresolved from staff consultation meeting

1. Can other schools provide the standard and quality of SEN support that Cradley supplies, having over 300 pupils on the SEN register?

Yes. We would also expect schools to increase their capacity for supporting children with SEN as they take on staff from Cradley High School.

*This needs to be answered with more specific details. Pupils with a statement of special needs will receive appropriate in class support from a teaching assistant, however, the majority of our pupils on the special needs register do not have a full statement and are listed as 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus'. These pupils benefit from the following things at Cradley:*

*-As the School has a higher than average number of pupils with a statement of special needs, many classes will have a teaching assistant present who is aware of all the special needs pupils. School Action and School Action Plus pupils currently benefit from the pressure of these TAs in their lessons as they can 'share' the support that the TA offers the pupil with a statement.*

*-The DFES website accepts that "The majority of children with special educational needs receive the help they need from classroom teachers in mainstream schools" this is already established at Cradley, for other schools this realistically means that all schemes of work must be differentiated so they are accessible for pupils of all abilities and needs. It will naturally takes other schools time to get to understand the needs of these pupils and rewrite their schemes of work appropriately. This time will prevent the pupils accessing the syllabus in their new schools which could lead to behavioural problems and will lead to less attainment.*

*-Cradley has already successfully integrated its SEN cohort. The SEN code of practice states that when a school accepts a child with the SEN "the school should be in possession of a good deal of useful information about the child, including detailed background information collated by the primary school SENCO; copies of IEPs prepared in support of intervention through School Action or School Action Plus; and any systems of any educational needs. This information can help to shape curriculum and pastoral planning for the pupil in the first few months at secondary school. Many mainstream secondary schools supplement the information received from primary schools by carrying out their own*

assessments of new entrants” (para 6.7) *This is obviously a huge administrative task when moving the number of pupils that has been proposed before September 2008. pupils will have to be allocated new schools, have records transferred and then alterations may have to be considered for curriculum and pastoral planning and, as stated, schools may also wish to make their own assessments of the pupils. Existing staff at other secondary schools will not have the time to implement these changes in time to hit your deadline and, as stated above, pupil behaviour and attainment will suffer.*

*-many special needs found in the school pupils affect a pupil's concentration. Small class sizes are accepted as being beneficial in raising attainment of all pupils but especially those with special needs. Cradley's exceptional 'Value Added' scores on the GCSE league tables show that Cradley, more than most Dudley schools, help pupils improve and perform because of these small class sizes. Estelle Morris states in her introduction to the SEN code of practice "The Government's education policy is focused on helping all children release their potential. We are committed to developing an education service that provides equality of opportunity and high achievement for all children." Cradley High has proved that pupils with low levels of achievement when they begin the school perform better than pupils with similar levels of achievement who attend other schools. By making these pupils attend schools where this improvement does not happen, it is reasonable to assume that the proposal will have a direct impact upon their eventual attainment and that they will not be receiving "equality of opportunity and high achievement."*

*-A large proportion of SEN pupils have difficulties with literacy – the ability to read and write. Not only has Cradley improved English GCSE results in recent years to 48% but the school has also reacted by offering excellent teaching in ICT where children who have difficulties with their literacy can be taught to correctly utilise literacy aiding tools (such as spell-check, computer dictionaries and thesaurus and grammar check) and achieve qualifications in the process.*

*-The Autism Outreach Team currently offer a service to Autistic Spectrum Disorder pupils to familiarise them with their new school preceding their move from primary to secondary school. This is because pupils with ASD often find change distressing and upsetting. Cradley has a number of pupils on the SEN register with ASD who find the proposed move distressing regardless of the support, however, with the Autism Outreach Team working already managing their usual caseload of year 6 pupils, will there be provision to offer current Cradley pupils the same level of support.*

*-It is a sad fact of life that SEN pupils are often the target of*

*bullying. The high proportion of SEN pupils at Cradley mean that SEN is accepted as a part of everyday life. If moved to other schools, SEN pupils will become more isolated and more likely to be a target for bullies. I have no doubt that other schools will react to incidents of bullying but, by that stage, the pupil has already been a victim. It would be very difficult to begin a new school as 'the new boy' and then emphasise the difference by also having different needs within the classroom.*

2. We have a number of pupils who are travellers and have fostered relationships with the families that allow learning opportunities when they are travelling and when they are in school. Is there a provision to provide places in the same school for these pupils to ensure that their education does not suffer?

The traveller's education service is aware of the situation and will ensure that pupils continue to appropriate support.

*This also needs clarification. It seems unlikely that pupils will successfully transferred before the travelling pupils leave school for their travelling season. These pupils then return to school after October half term. This will leave a whole half term where schools will be expected to provide work of an appropriate level for pupils that they have not only never assessed, but also never even met.*

3. Consider the pupils that are already on their second school after having been excluded / asked to leave / not being able to cope at their previous school. The authority has been happy to send them here for many years and we have done a good job with many of them. How are they going to cope in a third school?

Transferring schools midway through a year or key stage is often difficult. We will continue to support pupils, Cradley High School and the receiving schools during this process.

*This answer accepts that transferring schools will be 'difficult' for all pupils – it does not address the fact that pupils who have been excluded from other schools and then managed to work well within the support structures that we have at Cradley will be asked to move again. The nature of the 'support' offered needs to be clarified.*

4. Can you give a guarantee, in writing, that there will be no compulsory redundancies if the school were to close?

If a decision to close is made, all staff are at risk of losing their jobs. However, there were no redundancies from the Primary School Review and we expect the same situation in this review. We cannot offer a guarantee but we do not wish to make any redundancies as this costs money which should go to the children. We will work with staff and unions to ensure appropriate future placements.

*John Freeman stated at the community meeting at Colley Lane Primary School that he had “guaranteed” teachers new post within the borough.*

5. Admission numbers may have dipped, but the school takes on a substantial number of pupils throughout the year – why has this fact been omitted?

The number of mid-year admissions is not sufficient to alter the overall position. There are simply too few pupils attending Cradley.

*I would contest this issue. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) send the majority of pupils that they deal with to Cradley and the school is well adapted to supported pupils with English as an Additional Language.*

*Cradley also admits a number of pupils who have had behaviour problems elsewhere as well as pupils who have had social difficulties or been bullied at other schools. Add to this number of pupils who move into the area and the number is significant enough to be factored into the figures that have been projected.*

6. There are at least 4 major housing developments going on in the area: Former Cradley Heath Speedway, feeding Dudley Wood, one of our major feeder schools; Former Huntingdon Gardens previously feeding Colley Lane, our major feeder school; Henley Foundaries, Banners Lane; Clancys, Belle Vale. (ref page 16 point 6)

These housing developments are not large enough to have a sufficient impact on admission to Cradley.

*Added to the pupils mentioned above, I would argue that these developments will provide enough pupils to have an impact on the projections provided by the LEA.*

7 – Remind me to tell Rob about the Ofsted last Friday.

## Appendix 2

[Already included as objection 5]

### Objection 7

I am writing on behalf of the Dudley Labour Group of Councillors to object to proposals to close Cradley High. This letter is in addition to any representations made by local members of the Council supporting the views of parents and residents in the Cradley and Foxcote ward.

The nature of our objections fall into two main categories: statutory failure to consult and lack of consideration for community cohesion.

#### Failure to Consult

Statutory proposals include the explicit requirement that adequate time and sufficient information should be provided to allow consultees to form a considered view. We are aware that on a number of occasions that has not always happened. Specifically at Halesowen Area Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> September and then on the following evening at the Select Committee on Children's Services. Both of the committees are formally and properly constituted but at no stage was any attempt made to properly or coherently represent the views expressed, despite the fact the consultation was to end on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. Consequently the proposal to close Cradley High has not been endorsed by any body or authority other than the Lead Member for Children's Services and officers of her Directorate. **38, 41**

#### Community Cohesion

No attempt appears to have been made by the proposers to identify significant characteristics of either the school, the local population or the wider community of Cradley. Requests for specific (but not individual) information on pupil educational needs, support services and staff expertise have not been provided. **46** Also, issues raised about the suitability and availability of alternative placements for pupils requiring extra support have not been addressed. These concerns, plus the fact that the LEA has not issued proposals to create additional places at other local and appropriate schools, form the basis of the second reason for our objection. **2, 13, 15, 43, 47**

The Dudley Group of Labour Councillors is very concerned that the consequences of the closure of Cradley High have never been fully considered by either the initial decision makers or as part of the consultation process. It is our conclusion that this makes any decision flawed and subject to legal challenge.

Finally and with regret, we note the failure to meaningfully and properly consult. This, coupled with omissions in considering the impact on community cohesion will create problems for individual pupils and their families for generations to come. Problems, which could have and should have been avoided. **41**

### Objection 8

I'm writing to you hoping that you can undo what Councillor Walker has done to Cradley parents and Cradley High School.

1. I was rather disappointed that I did not have a reply to the letter of complaint I wrote to Councillor Walker, Ray Watson and John Freeman on admissions giving the wrong information out about Cradley High School having no places as they were closing and they were not taking the September pupils in. as a result my grandson missed 14 days of his schooling and then he went to Cradley High School. **34, 48**
2. Why Councillor Walker, Ray Watson and John Freeman wants to close a school that has achieved 73% they only one other school was Oldswinford School so it proves that Cradley High School is the best in Dudley. **1, 8, 11**
3. Our children are loosing confidence in the headteacher because they can't see what she is doing to save their school and they feel let down. **7**
4. The council should be proud of Cradley High School the reputation Cradley High has been a troubled school is nothing but rumours the council knew about it yet did nothing to promote the good work to stop Cradley children travelling to schools further a field. **32**
5. The Dudley Council did not take any of the responsibility for the school closing but put the blame on the staff governors, councillors and parents for the falling numbers attending the school. **32**

6. Cradley High School has shown a dramatic improvement over the past few years with 73% well above the Dudley average and way above the national average. **1**

7. She made the decision and at the same time launched a review of Secondary Education throughout the borough deliberately excluding Cradley High. **40**

8. Our children have rights to say what they want but no one is listening to them all the children want to stay at Cradley High School because it's the best and the only school in Cradley and take their rights from them they will have nothing. **1, 8, 11, 49**

9. In the summer holidays Cllr Freeman phoned the pupils who were going to Cradley High School in September places at Hillcrest, so we lost a number of children to HILLCREST. **50**

10. If the school closes our children will have to leave home at seven o'clock to be at school at 8:30 that is not fair when there is a good school within walking distance they are only 13 years old and it will be dark at 7 o'clock on mornings. **2, 3, 15**

11. The children will have to go on buses if they don't turn up on time (which is quite often) they will start playing truant rather than go in to school late.

12. We did not voice our opinions on the closure of the school as we were told we could not speak at the meetings and Cllr Jackson said that we were out of control and that the police was called (which was a lie to make us look bad). **38, 51**

13. The letters from the children of Cradley High School to keep the school open were presented late but that was the governors fault do they want the school to close too. **7, 52**

14. If the school needs money spent on it where has the money gone for the up keep of the school. **53**

15. Cllr Walker said about fencing round the school but that's down to the council.

16. All that we ask from Cllr Walker was 2 years to try and turn the school round. **9, 17, 23, 40**

17. From the first meeting it was a done deal to close Cradley High School and to keep the C of E School open. Because if we had asked the conservatives to help us instead of labour our school would of stayed open. It's all political. **54**

Enclosing a paper cutting on school places as usual Dudley Council is backing out of what they said but it was not only myself my son that they told but three committee members the same also there was a lady trying to get her son into Cradley High as she had no where else to send him to but was told by Tony Fowler that she would not take him so this is why the places are falling and I was told in June that there were no places. **34**

### Objection 9

I am writing to put on record my further objection to the proposed closure of Cradley High School. This is in addition to my letter outlining earlier objections which I am assured will form a part of the papers put before the SOC.

I refer to the letter written by the Minister of State for Schools on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2006 to Linda Waltho MP concerning earlier consultations on school closures. I refer directly to the following two paragraphs:

“Officials are writing to the local authority and SOC to confirm my decision. However given the levels of concern expressed in this case, their letter will make it clear that I remain very concerned about the impact on public confidence. The letter will confirm that I would expect the authority to consider very carefully how it handles future reorganisations of this kind, in particular, where sensitive school closures are involved. For instance the authority should ensure that their consultation exercise is comprehensive and robust. The authority should consider providing more detailed information in consultation leaflets (e.g. more specifically tailored to the individual school concerned) and also to allow more time for parents and the public during consultation so that those with concerns are reassured that their views have been adequately considered and taken into account.

The letter from officials will also confirm that whilst it is clear that the SOC did consider the impact of the proposals on local standards, it is less clear what relevant documentary evidence was considered. For school closure proposals the authority must provide a statement as to whether the school has been inspected in the last 3 years and, if so, details of the outcome of the inspection, together with an assessment of the quality of any schools to which displaced pupils may transfer. Officials will signify our view that little

information was provided for the SOC on the 'assessment of the alternative provision' and that school performance figures might have been helpful to enable the SOC to consider the impact on standards, given that OFSTED reports provided were largely over 3 years old." **41, 55**

I also point to an earlier statement in the letter.

"Whilst the statutory consultation period was quite short, the papers show that there was sufficient information provided to those affected to ensure that they understood what was proposed and could express their views. There was also a long period of consultation with school head teachers, governors and local councillors prior to this and information about the review was in the public domain."

Taking the latter paragraph first, This referred to the primary schools review which had been presented on a number of occasions to select committees, had been the object of a series of meetings, and had been revised on a number of occasions. It had in fact given the opportunity for a wide range of views and proposals to be considered before the specific schools were considered for closure. Each school affected had specific plans showing where the displaced children would be sent. Additional accommodation needs had been identified and planning was in place to deal with the displacement.

It rightly states that stakeholders had the opportunity for comment before the actual closure consultations were issued.

Contrast this with the position of Cradley High School. Discussions with Governors and the Head Teacher have revealed that the LEA had been in conversation with the School, not about closure, not about falling rolls, but specifically about standards. The school and governors were advised over a number of years that if they raised their standards then the school would not be at risk of closure. Standing back, this would seem a reasonable position by the LEA taking into account the potential for value to be added as the school has a high percentage of children with special educational needs and with English as a second language. **56**

The school have done wonderfully well attaining year on year increases in success with last year being a signal success in the target of 5 GCSE passes at C and above. Outstripping any other school in Dudley other than Old Swinford. **1**

The opportunity to allow full engagement of all parties in the future of

secondary education in the Borough is now upon us and a consultation period started on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006. This consultation is ongoing. On that same day 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006 the LEA announced its intention to consult on the closure of Cradley High School. This without any previous discussions with any of the parties involved. **40, 56**

The LEA have been specifically asked to provide detail or documents relating to the background for this decision. They have replied that there are no documents or details of meetings within the LEA or with Cabinet members prior to the consultation decision. **6**

My questions to the SOC are

- Why was this done? **57, 58**
- Who made the decision to effectively exclude Cradley High from the wider consultation? **40**
- How does this fit with the need to have specific proposals available for this school? **40**

I now turn to the first quoted paragraph and ask the SOC to consider the level of detail and manner of consultation. You have already been advised by me and others that many parents did not receive notice of the initial public meeting. Meetings with pupils and staff have been foreshortened and questions raised have not been answered. **36**

The special Halesowen Area committee was a shambles with many questions from parents unanswered, local Councillors refused time to ask questions and this even followed on in the subsequent full Council meeting. **41, 51**

In fact more time was not allowed for parents and the public during consultation and their views have not been adequately considered or taken into account. The Cabinet member may make reference to her attending a public meeting called by the parents and local residents, for which I thank her, however this was not a part of the formal consultation. I would point out however that parents commented following that meeting that it had been far more informative and they at least felt they were able to air their views without being “sneered at by officialdom” as one young couple put it. **38, 41**

Finally I turn to the second paragraph relating to the impact on standards and assessment of alternative provision. I am clear that little if any information is available to current or future parents on either of the above. In fact discussion with current parents was supposed to happen during the consultation period

(page 10 of the initial consultation document) and Mr Freeman advised this would begin in September 2006. In fact parents are being asked to attend initial meetings from January 10 2007 onwards. **2, 15, 41, 43, 56**

Special needs education is of paramount importance and with over 50% of the current pupils having some form of need one would have expected a full assessment of the impact and proposals within the consultation to deal with this. There is none, and all involved have expressed their doubts and major concerns about this. When questioned the LEA have given generalisations and seem to just expect this to happen. **9, 10, 28**

We have a reasonable number of children from communities who need translated documents. This is well known and has been brought to the attention of the LEA from the outset. Translations have never been made available to the families despite these requests. In fact the only translated material was a shortened version of the consultation document used at the Halesowen special Area Committee some two days before the end of the consultation period. When this point was raised at the Area Committee meeting Mr Watson advised that translation of documents would not be done as this would be 'illegal'. A point I am still totally confused over. **37**

To sum up my objections are that:

- There is insufficient information available to close this school. **41, 46, 56, 57**
- That the Councils own policy on consultation has been broken particularly the lack of translated material. **37, 41, 56**
- That there has been no information made available outlining the impact on standards. **41, 46, 56**
- That there has been no information made available on the deployment of displaced pupils. **2, 10, 15, 28, 43, 46**
- That the provision of special needs education has not been adequately considered by the decision makers. **2, 9, 10, 15, 28, 43, 46**
- That Cradley High School should have been included in the wider consultation on future secondary education provision. **40, 59**

I thank you for your time.

## Objection 10

### Introduction

The Governing Body of Cradley High School wish the Schools Organisation Committee to take the following points into consideration when making their judgements as to whether Cradley High should close.

- Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Provision

We feel strongly that the consultation document on the Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Provision should have been allowed to run its course before any decisions to close or expand schools were made. It seems totally illogical that Cradley High should have been nominated for closure whilst what has been described by Local Authority Officers as an overarching principles document was out for consultation. Surely the need to close or expand a school needs to be firmly set in guiding overarching strategic principles and the very document that would allow that to happen across the Local Authority was still out for consultation when the consultation document to close Cradley High was produced out of the blue. It is clear **that the decision to close Cradley was taken without any reference to the principles document and as such was not done in an equitable or fair way.** 40, 59, 62

- Falling Rolls

We acknowledge the issue of falling rolls due to a decline in the birth rate and its current impact on Cradley High School. The issue of surplus places throughout Dudley has been an ongoing issue of the past 3 years and is being used as a reason for closure by the Local Authority. The Local Authority has recognised this issue and their knowledge of it. Clearly they should have produced a Borough wide strategy identifying proposals for rectifying this issue. 32, 57, 60

We feel that the Local Authority should provide a demographic breakdown on the pupil numbers by wards, indicating **availability of places within an appropriate travelling distance between home and school.** This is a statutory requirement of the Local Authority to consider. This is also a significant consideration within the consultation document Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Provision, developing the education vision for Dudley. 61

With the Authority commencing a strategic review of it's secondary school provision, it is inconceivable for the authority to develop and expand provision within its schools by increasing intake numbers before this process has been completed. It is equally inconceivable that the Authority should choose to

close one of its secondary schools before the completion of that strategic review. **The decision to close Cradley High School should be postponed until the full consequences of the strategic review are clear.** 62

No research has been conducted into the needs of the Cradley communities and the reasons why parents are not choosing to send their children to Cradley High School. A significant reason that has been communicated to the Governing Body is the lack of resources and facilities available at the school. The management team of the school have developed, over a number of years, numerous proposals for developing these facilities. Consistent failure by the Local Authority to support these proposals has let down the school and more importantly the Cradley community. 13, 32, 47

- Other options

No information has been provided of any other options that were considered by the Directorate as alternatives to the closure of Cradley High School. **It is considered by the Governing Body that an amalgamation between the school and neighbouring schools could provide more beneficial outcomes for both the Authority and its communities.** 6

Cradley High School has an outstanding record and deserved reputation for supporting and educating children and young people with additional needs and particularly those with behavioural difficulties excluded from other more popular schools that were unable to meet their needs. 2, 9, 10, 15, 28, 43, 44

Neighbouring, high performing authorities are adopting policies to co-locate Special School provision alongside mainstream provision within the mainstream school setting, thus providing a more inclusive environment. Given the continuing difficulties being experienced by the LEA with its Special Schools strategy this option could provide a solution to the falling roll within Cradley High and the move towards a more inclusive strategy for pupils with additional educational needs. It could allow the Authority to develop a beacon provision for its diverse community of vulnerable young people with a holistic range of additional needs. This is also identified as a priority consideration within the Transforming Secondary Provision consultation. We feel that a bit of **joined up and creative thinking would not be out of place here, particularly when we read that some local Special School curriculum provision is found to be wanting.** 6, 62

- Housing

With at least 4 **significant housing developments within the catchment area for Cradley High School being at various stages of completion, no research into the effect these projects will have on the roll of the school has been evidenced for consideration** within this consultation and is therefore a major omission for the data projections. **42**

- Need to decide now.

The school is clearly financially viable for the current academic year and whilst the data appears to show that on current trends the projected numbers would not make the school sustainable in the future, the impact of the Borough Review on secondary school provision should be resolved and its implications clearly understood before any rash decisions to close schools are made. **17, 23, 42, 60**

We feel that Cradley High school has been singled out for closure in order to precipitate the smooth passing of the overall review. **59**

- Head and Staff

The Head teacher has developed a clear philosophy of 'Can Do' through the structure of the school and we have supported her wholeheartedly in this respect. Many children entering Cradley High School do so with below National Average Key Stage 2 test results. In order to meet the needs of these young people the school has designed a curriculum that is accessible to all children irrespective of their entry results, thus allowing each child to reach their potential. The success of this philosophy is evidenced by the continual improvements in key Stage 4 examination results and if Cradley High were to close the educational outlook for a significant number of children will be damaged – and this will be as a direct consequence of the Local Authorities actions. **1**

The schools reputation for supporting vulnerable children and those with additional needs, as commented upon earlier, is acknowledged across the Borough. The unique nature of this group of children, often excluded from other schools, requires highly skilled and committed staff to support and educate them. **The knowledge and skills of the staff at Cradley High will potentially be lost upon the closure of this school. The synergy of this group of staff will be lost forever.** **44**

- Size of the school

It is the philosophy and belief of the Governors that **small schools provide the best outcomes for children and young people**. We think that small schools provide a particular ethos and environment for children and young people, and for the staff. Small schools have a particular advantage over other types of larger schools in that the staff, including the head teacher and deputy head teacher, know all children and young people by sight if not name and they engender a particular sense of community among the children and the staff. We believe that the small school also enables the head teacher and deputy head teacher to have a significant teaching commitment and that this has been a real contributing factor to the year on year improvement in results. We would corroborate the Headteachers view that the size of a school is a significant factor in the behaviour of its students. **1, 63**

- School as a community resource

Consistent advice and guidance from Local Authority personnel that improving the academic outcomes for the children of Cradley High would make the school a viable entity have been heeded and followed by the school leadership. Successive years of exam improvements bear testament to the fact that this is where our focus has been. We feel that the Local Authority is now being inconsistent with its advice, maintaining that the Head and Governing Body should have taken different action to their advice to improve the schools long-term future. The suggestion that the Governors are somehow responsible for the current situation does not sit comfortably with us. **33, 60**

**We fully support the Head teachers view that the school has a significant role to play within the local community.** As the Authority is fully aware the local community puts the facilities of the school to good use. Despite the best efforts of the Head teacher and Governing Body (over a number of years) to attract additional funding to enhance the schools facilities, support from the Local Authority to enable this has not been forthcoming. We feel particularly let down and unsupported by successive Local Authority senior managers and elected members. **45**

## Conclusion

In conclusion feel that we have raised several key issues and reasons why Cradley High School should remain open. We respectfully request that the Schools Organisation Committee give due consideration to these.

Once again we would wish to point out that whilst the tentative statistical

projections suggest that the pupil numbers would not sustain the long term future of the school, we feel that the Authority should look at joining up it's strategies including the Special School Strategy and the Secondary School Strategy, in order to identify the Best Value outcomes for children and young people in the Borough and encompass this within the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

### **Responses to Objections**

1. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE A\* - C passes has improved from 26% in 2002 to 73% in 2006. However, when English and mathematics is included the 2006 percentage is only 31% compared with the Dudley average of 43%. Cradley is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22. (See pages 19 – 21, 29 and **Appendix 1**.)
2. The proposal is for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to transfer to alternative schools by September 1 2007. Discussions have been taking place for several months with the nearest local schools to consider options for increasing the number of places available within schools. Subject to School Organisation Committee approval of the proposals the Directorate of Children's Services will use its powers in collaboration with schools to admit pupils over the published admission numbers where necessary. This will ensure that there are more places available in local schools for pupils displaced from Cradley. Many pupils live closer to alternative schools than to Cradley. The welfare of pupils is a high priority for the Council and these issues will be considered in detail when more information is available about parent preferences and a decision has been made.
3. Schools Forum will consider a range of financial measures to support parents and schools subject to School Organisation Committee approval of the proposals. This will include contribution to uniform costs. All pupils at Cradley live less than 3 miles from one or more alternative secondary schools. It is not expected that any pupils will qualify for transport support.
4. Statutory notices are prepared very carefully in accordance with legislation and guidance. Due to an error the wrong draft was sent to the media for publication on the Thursday. The error was noticed but not in time to stop the newspaper printing the wrong version. The correct version was reprinted in the newspaper on Friday 24 November with revised return date, posted on the school gates and in other public areas.

5. It was not possible to publish the statutory notice any earlier as the consultation responses required analysis prior to consideration of the next steps. Publishing after Christmas would have extended the time for a decision to be made and shortened the amount of time for supporting pupils, parents and schools for transfer by September 2007 (if the proposals were approved). The time available was in accordance with legislation and guidance.
6. Other options were considered before the consultation document was published in July. The consultation document (pages 6 -7) refers to the alternative options considered. Cradley High has relatively few pupils and there are sufficient places in other schools to take the 231 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. The closure of any other secondary school would displace a higher number of pupils and create more pressure to find alternative places. Whilst most of the surplus places are at Cradley it is likely that parents would not want to transfer to Cradley as they had already opted for other schools and there is a risk of more parents seeking places outside Dudley. Any amalgamation would require a split site arrangement using the Cradley site and another school. Split site arrangements create a number of difficulties including inadequate accommodation and facilities on the Cradley site and better facilities on the other site. There is no capital available to achieve the improvements required at Cradley even if the public park issues were resolved. The costs of running split site schools are higher. The governing body of the amalgamated school would be required to balance the budget and as there is no prospect of pupil numbers increasing there would still be significant staffing reductions. The suggestion of “merging with a special school” would not address the financial problems. Special schools receive funding to cover the high costs of providing for pupils with statements of Special educational need. Whilst there may be some efficiency savings in premises and administration costs there would still not be sufficient income to maintain a declining secondary school. All of the options considered would create more disruption than the proposed closure of Cradley. During the whole process there has been no challenge to the financial difficulties or the implications for the school set out in the consultation document. No feasible alternatives to the proposal have emerged.
7. The headteacher and the governors are fully committed to ensuring the best possible educational provision for the pupils at Cradley. Their leadership has made a significant contribution to the improvement in GCSE results since 2002.

8. The proposal to close Cradley High has become necessary because the impact of falling pupil numbers means that Cradley will not be able to afford to maintain the quality of educational provision. As the budget falls significant reductions in staffing will be required with an adverse impact on the range of opportunities available. It will become increasingly difficult for Cradley to maintain quality and standards achieved. The link between falling numbers, budgets, quality of provision and standards is described in the consultation document and has been raised regularly at meetings and in correspondence.
9. The figures and comments referred to about the number and percentage of pupils with different categories of special educational needs were accurate. The key fact is that the school will be starting the 2007/8 financial year with a funding gap of around £494k. Whether the pupils with SEN are expressed in numbers or percentages the school will not be able to afford to meet their needs. The proposal will ensure that all Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils transfer to schools where needs can be fully met and the school can concentrate its limited resources on the older pupils that will complete their education at Cradley. (See **Appendix 11**)
10. Change can be difficult for people of all ages. Pupils, parents and schools will be supported to ensure that any transfer is as smooth as possible. A range of measures will be planned with alternative schools to ensure that induction arrangements are effective and include opportunities for pupils to get to know staff and pupils before transfer takes place.
11. The number of admissions to Cradley has fallen every year for 5 years. The numbers in the school have become so low that the school will not have enough money to sustain the current level of provision and significant reductions in staffing will be required. The numbers of applications to secondary schools across the Borough are beginning to reduce but no other school faces such severe financial difficulties. All other schools have sufficient pupils to remain financially and educationally viable. (See **Appendix 6**)
12. The original data regarding admissions was provided by Old Swinford Hospital School. The school caters for boarding pupils as well as day pupils and their admissions data is calculated differently to other secondary schools. Further information was provided to explain the differences and the admission numbers for Old Swinford Hospital School have been included in the prescribed information and for all other schools in the Appendices.

13. All secondary schools cater for pupils from different backgrounds. It is not in the interests of any community to be served by a school which cannot afford to maintain the quality of educational provision that pupils are entitled to. The proposals will ensure that pupils have access to a broader range of opportunities and better facilities in larger, sustainable schools. (See **Appendix 11**)
14. The consultation document was widely circulated, available on the website and received substantial coverage in the media. Responses were received from the community and they are available as a matter of public record (by appointment).
15. There are sufficient places in other Dudley secondary schools now. Discussions are taking place to ensure that more places are created in the nearest schools to increase the potential for parents' first preferences and further reducing the need for pupils to travel. These processes require detailed consideration by the schools. All of the local secondary schools are committed to supporting the process but have to consider a range of issues including the impact on staffing, timetabling and many other areas.
16. All responses have been considered carefully at each stage.
17. Cradley is facing severe financial difficulties now. The numbers of children in primary schools are known along with the number of housing developments, admission trends for Cradley and other schools and other demographic factors such as birth rates. There is no evidence of a significant increase in demand. Long term population projections from the Office of National Statistics do not suggest any increase in the numbers of secondary age pupils in the foreseeable future.
18. Staffing is a matter for the governing body to determine within the resources available.
19. Yes.
20. The support for uniform costs was managed through the receiving primary schools rather than to individual parents. Many of the parents opted to transfer their children in the last few weeks of the summer term which left very little time to prepare induction arrangements, changes of uniform and other details. Receiving schools worked hard with children and parents to ensure they had the best start possible. Evidence from children and staff gives a much more positive view of the transfer process than your letter

implies.

21. The child did not transfer to a Dudley primary school and there is no mechanism for transferring money from Dudley Council to schools in other authorities. The transfer also took place before the end of the summer term and the transfer of funds to Dudley primary schools was scheduled for pupils starting in September. Your circumstances required a different process.
22. A number of responses have been received from former pupils, current pupils, parents and others about how much they have benefited from Cradley. The proposal to close the school is not based on the performance aspects of the school now but on the fact that the school can no longer afford to sustain the current level of provision. Irrespective of the decision that School Organisation Committee may take, the school will be forced to make significant reductions in staffing and pupils will not have the same quality experience that pupils have had to date.
23. Cradley High does not have any time to attract more pupils. The school is already living beyond its means as there is a projected deficit on this year's budget of £194k. This will be carried forward to 2007/8 which will be around £300k less because of around 100 pupils less than last year. The school is required to take action now to reduce costs which will mean significant reductions in staffing.
24. Windsor High School is very popular with parents. It is oversubscribed every year.
25. The Council and all schools take the issue of drugs extremely seriously. Any specific details should be provided direct to the school or to the Council so that appropriate action may be taken.
26. The law on admissions has changed several times over the last decade. Parents are no longer required to send their children to the nearest school. The procedures for parents requiring places in Dudley secondary schools are set out in the Parents Guides which are published in September each year. Parents express preference for specific schools. The Council is required to ensure there are sufficient places to meet demand but has limited power regarding which pupils go to each school.
27. Primary schools are working hard to ensure that extended provision is in place. This will extend the hours where children may be supervised beyond

the normal school day. It is parents' responsibility to ensure pupils are cared for outside the normal school day.

28. Every pupil and parent will be supported. Where pupils have specific needs staff from Cradley, Dudley support services and receiving schools will work closely with parents and pupils to ensure that their needs are met before, during and after any transfer to an alternative school. Pupils with SEN often require additional support and the earlier that preparation can start the better. This is why parents meetings were scheduled before School Organisation Committee considers the proposal.
29. It is not expected that class sizes in alternative schools will rise. It is expected that there will be additional staffing in alternative schools to ensure that class sizes in those school are not adversely affected.
30. The number of first choice preferences for admission in September 2006 was only 34 and these preferences were made long before any announcement of proposals to close Cradley. Numbers have dropped every year for 5 years. Although there has been widespread coverage of the proposals and activity aimed at promoting the school only 19 first choice preferences have been made for admission in September 2007. There are not enough children to fill all secondary school places and not enough of those want to attend Cradley.
31. The key fact is that there are not children to fill all secondary places. All of the schools nearest to Cradley are more popular with parents. A number of possible reasons for this are included in the consultation document and the main text of the report to School Organisation Committee. The figures presented in the table are the published admission numbers not the actual numbers attending. Examination of the actual numbers of pupils in primary schools confirms the difficulty of attracting more pupils to Cradley High.
32. The local authority has a responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient places within the Borough to meet demand. Schools are promoted equally through the Parents Guide to Admissions to Secondary Schools which is published every September. Any additional promotion of individual schools is a matter for that school. It would be inappropriate for the local authority to promote Cradley above others.
33. The focus on raising standards was an important factor in achieving the year on year increase in GCSE results since 2002. This is important for

the pupils concerned and their prospects for further education, training and employment. It is also important in a situation where parents compare GCSE results as one of the measures in determining which school to send their children. In parallel, with improvement at GCSE the number of admissions to Year 7 at Cradley has dropped every year for five years. The school is in a financial situation where the school can no longer sustain the educational provision.

34. It is a common strategy for objectors to criticise aspects of the process. Claims that admissions staff had advised parents that there were no places at Cradley or that places were not being allocated at Cradley have no foundation. Admissions staff are very clear in advising that there are places at Cradley and pupils have been admitted to different year groups throughout the process to date. They are also correct in advising parents that the school is subject to closure proposals, rather than as suggested that "Cradley was closing". Parents should be made aware of this important fact before proceeding. The allegations continue to be repeated despite many assurances and explanations at meetings and in correspondence and no evidence presented to support the claims.
35. Parents are likely to take account of a range of factors when considering secondary schools. Comments from primary school staff may be one of those factors. It is unlikely to be the only factor. The suggestion that parents will decide solely on the basis of negative comments by primary school staff about a secondary school is unlikely to be a fair reflection of parents' ability to make their own decisions. Parents complete the applications not primary school staff.
36. The consultation document was sent out with a covering letter directly to parents, governors and staff giving details of the consultation meetings. The timing of this aimed to inform pupils, staff and parents before the media. The sophistication of the news gathering systems means that there is limited time available. There is a risk of some people not being informed within this time frame for a variety of reasons. For example, at the first governors consultation meeting some governors had received the relevant information and some had not even though the same communication system was used for all. Every effort was made to address this including a further consultation meeting. The volume of correspondence and the number of visits to the website does not support the view that "communication has been poor". There is always room for improvement and suggestions would be welcome.

37. The consultation document included a notice “If you would like to be consulted in a different language” with contact details. Appropriate language speakers are available to support consultation through interpretation and to enable dialogue. No requests have been received. Offers of special meetings for the Yemeni community were made at a variety of meetings. No requests were received. Legislation and guidance does not require translation of documents. It is not “illegal” to translate documents. In an effort to support communication two documents prepared as summaries for specific meetings were translated into Arabic (see **Appendix 11**).
38. The Special Halesowen Area Committee was convened at the request of the Halesowen Area Committee to consider the proposals to discontinue Cradley High School. The timing and conduct of Area Committee meetings is a matter for the Area Committee to determine.
39. The consultation process has been open, transparent and every response has been considered carefully. The suggestion that “Dudley LEA is gagging the headteacher” is without foundation.
40. Differences between the two consultations, Transforming Secondary Education (TSE) and proposals to discontinue Cradley High have been explained at meetings and in correspondence. Consultation on TSE is part of the preparations for Dudley’s inclusion in the national government programme Building Schools for the Future. Inclusion in the programme is dependent on convincing the DfES that Dudley’s proposals cover the whole strategic area (the Borough). Funding will only be allocated to projects that address the key policy areas set out in the consultation document and offer value for money. Dudley is unlikely to be included in the programme before 2010/11 and it would be some years later before new or refurbished schools are available. Cradley High continues to exist and if School Organisation Committee approve the proposals it is expected that Cradley staff would be employed in other Dudley schools. There are no grounds for excluding Cradley from this consultation and the claim is not true. However, the claim continues to be made by objectors. The suggestion that the “Secondary Review” should be completed before any proposal to close Cradley is considered ignores two crucial facts. Firstly, the Building Schools for the Future Programme is a 15 year programme and there is no certainty that Dudley, will be included, how long it will take or whether the funding will continue for 15 years. Secondly, Cradley High cannot sustain the current level of education provision now and will be forced to make further significant reductions in

2007/8.

41. Consultation on school organisation proposals is not prescribed in regulations or guidance. It is a matter for the proposers to determine how consultation is carried out and who with. Following concerns raised about Dudley's consultation on proposals to close a primary school, the DfES confirmed "Ministers have concluded that the authority met their statutory duty to consult interested parties as required under Section 29(4) of the School Standards and Framework Act (as amended)" and "there is no case for taking action under section 496 or 497 of the Education Act 1996 against the local authority". The DfES included some areas where improvements could be made which have all been adopted.
42. Mathematical models are used to estimate the yield in pupils of statutory school age likely to arise from housing developments. Different authorities use different formulas based on the type of units (executive flats or five bedroom houses), where occupants might come from (new or relocated from elsewhere in the area), timescale of developments (in construction or just marked for housing development) and previous experience in the area. A typical yield would be around 3 or 4 pupils per statutory age group per 100 units. As Cradley High has around 100 empty places in Year 7 it would need between 2,500 and 3,300 to fill Cradley Year 7. This assumes that all of these would be new pupils and not relocating from other housing nearby. It also assumes that parents would opt to send their children to Cradley and not to other Dudley secondary schools. Account must also be taken of fewer children in primary schools looking for secondary school places. The number of new housing units in construction, in planning or from potential development sites is not enough to increase demand for places significantly.
43. Discussions have been taking place with local secondary schools on a range of issues. There are sufficient places across Dudley secondary schools now. Planning to accommodate 231 Cradley High pupils in the nearest secondary schools requires consideration of how many pupils might be admitted above PAN, how they might be organised and what resources might be needed such as staffing, equipment and accommodation. This work is additional to the normal planning for September 2007 which is underway in all secondary schools. The planning is made more complex because parents have not yet expressed their initial preferences. Following the recent parents meetings more information is available to support this process. It would not have been possible to engage parents or schools in the detail of this work at the start

of the autumn term. Schools are continuing to assess these issues and are committed to supporting the transfer process should School Organisation Committee approve the proposals. If the proposals are approved measures to support pupils, parents and receiving schools will be implemented quickly.

44. All Dudley schools have pupils with special educational needs and many also have pupils for whom English is an additional language. The needs of these pupils are met very well in these schools and it is expected that staff from Cradley will secure new posts in these schools. All pupils will be supported before, during and after any transfer to ensure transition is smooth and effective.
45. The 2006/7 Leisure and Adult Education budget is projecting a deficit of around £74k. This raises a number of questions including whether there is sufficient support locally to ensure that provision is sustainable.
46. The Consultation Responses attached as **Appendix 2** to the report to School Organisation Committee includes (pages 128 -153) details a list of questions from a ward councillor and the responses. Where the question was not clear further details were asked for but not provided. Many other questions were raised by ward councillors and all are detailed along with the responses in the correspondence file.
47. The proposals to discontinue Cradley High have been formulated because of the rapid decline over five years of pupil numbers, the severe financial difficulties and the required significant reductions in cost. This will impact adversely on the ability of the school to sustain educational provision. It is not in the interests of the community to be served by a school which is no longer capable of meeting the needs of the pupils or the local community. A detailed analysis of the “significant characteristics of either the school, the local population or the wider community of Cradley”, beyond the information already available, would not address the issue. No feasible alternatives to the proposals emerged during the consultation or to date.
48. A reply was sent to the original letter shortly after it arrived. When a further letter from the objector arrived, a reply and copy of the original response was sent. Copies of all correspondence are available to School Organisation Members in a separate file and to any member of the public (by appointment).
49. Pupil’s views have been expressed at various consultation meetings

including the school council, special Halesowen Area Committee and parents. They have also been expressed in correspondence. All of these views have been considered carefully. Whilst the pupils demonstrate in their comments a strong commitment to keeping Cradley High school no feasible alternatives to the falling pupil numbers and severe financial difficulties have emerged.

50. Hillcrest is one of Dudley's most popular schools. For the last few years there have been many more applications than the 152 places available. Following successful appeals each year the number of pupils admitted has exceeded the published admission number (PAN) of 152 and resulted in year groups closer to 180. Hillcrest made a successful application to the DfES for funding to expand under the government's Expansion of Popular and Successful Schools. School Organisation Committee approved the proposals to increase the PAN to 180 in July 2006. In order to avoid a substantial number of appeals, the parents of about 12 pupils living nearest to Hillcrest were offered places. These parents had applied to Hillcrest originally and were allocated places at Cradley. It is highly likely, in the context of previous admissions appeals that these parents would have gained places at Hillcrest. This is entirely consistent with the aim to support parental preferences wherever possible.
51. Responses have been received through views expressed at consultation meetings and in correspondence throughout the consultation process. This includes a number of responses from the objector. Responses were also presented by speakers and in written form at the special Halesowen Area Committee meeting. The discontinuation of Cradley High School has been proposed because the school can no longer afford to maintain the educational provision. There will be significant reductions in staffing and opportunities for pupils. The objector's views on the proposed closure of the school have been recorded several times prior to the special Halesowen Area Committee meeting and afterwards.
52. Responses before the end of the consultation were formally reported in the Consultation Report attached as **Appendix 2** to the School Organisation Committee response. All correspondence received whether submitted during the consultation period or later has been considered carefully and is available to School Organisation Committee members in a separate file and to any member of the public by appointment.
53. Cradley High School receives money based on the number of pupils attending and allocated through the same locally agreed formula for all

schools. The school has received all of the money it is entitled to. There are too few pupils to generate the amount of money required to pay for the educational provision that secondary age pupils are entitled to.

54. The processes required by legislation and guidance have been described at consultation meetings and in correspondence many times. Reference to the DfES School Organisation website has also been provided on many occasions. The decision making process has been described in detail. Considerable care has been taken at meetings and in writing to avoid using language suggesting that the decision to close Cradley High had already been taken. Following the receipt of objections during the representation period determination of the proposal to discontinue Cradley High School is a matter for School Organisation Committee.
55. One of the concerns raised with the DfES was over the standard of education at alternative schools for displaced pupils. In July the DfES stated "In this case it is clear that the SOC did consider the impact of the proposals on local standards, but it is less clear what relevant documentary evidence was considered when making that judgement".
56. The DfES also stated "Whilst the prescribed information does not require school performance figures, they might have been helpful to enable the SOC to consider the impact on standards in the absence of recent OFSTED reports". Detailed information was provided for School Organisation Committee but the Directorate of Children's Services has provided additional information for all proposals since January 2006 and made it more explicit. With regard to proposals to discontinue Cradley High performance information on all secondary schools was provided in the consultation document and published on the website. In addition the school profiles have been extracted from the government website and printed in a separate file. All of this information has been freely available on the website with references included in the consultation document or provided where requested. The recently published GCSE tables including English and mathematics have also been included in the response to School Organisation Committee. This table shows that Cradley only achieved 31% compared with the Dudley average of 43% and ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 secondary schools. As all of the local secondary schools achieved higher percentages the impact of these proposals for displace pupils is likely to be positive.
57. The challenge arising from falling birth rates has been known in Dudley since at least 1999 when KPMG were commissioned to report on the

situation. As the birth rate continued to fall through out the last decade reference was made on a regular basis about the need to take action. This included two OFSTED reports on Dudley LEA in 2000 and 2002, high profile consultations on primary school review proposals in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Information has been shared regularly with headteachers, governors, Schools Forum, Admissions Forum, Select Committees and councillors. There has also been frequent coverage in the local media. It is unlikely that stakeholders would not have been aware that the falling numbers of pupils in primary schools would reduce the demand for places in secondary schools. The governing body at Cradley will have been acutely aware of the implications of falling pupil numbers particularly as they are required to set the school budget annually and numbers have dropped year on year for five years. In normal circumstances the focus on improving standards would be expected to attract higher numbers of pupils. In Dudley and the Halesowen Area, in particular where the issue of falling pupil numbers was widely known, the governing body would be expected to monitor the improvement in standards and the impact of that improvement on pupil numbers. Dudley LEA advice to concentrate on standards avoided any threat of closure due to failure to meet floor targets or failure to provide a satisfactory standard of education. Whilst standards have clearly improved pupil numbers have reached a point where the school is no longer capable of sustaining the educational provision. The proposals are a direct response to the demographic context facing the schools and the inevitable impact its capacity to provide education of the required standard.

58. The reasons for the proposal are described in the consultation document and throughout the report to School Organisation Committee. The process fully complies with legislation and guidance related to making school organisation changes.
59. The Governing Body suggestion that the consultation document on Transforming Secondary Education should run its course and that “the need to close or expand a school should needs to be firmly set in guiding overarching strategic principles”. The need to prepare Dudley for inclusion in the national Building Schools for the Future programme was raised with secondary headteachers very early in 2005. It has been raised regularly with headteachers, governors and councillors regularly over the last two years. Dudley will not be included in the programme until 2010. The DfES will not approve funding for any development until there is a widely supported strategy for the whole Borough and that investment offers appropriate value for money. Cradley High will be brought to the attention

of the DfES through the Surplus Places return which identifies any school with surplus places above 25%. Based on the number of pupils on the current roll and admissions for September there will be around 50% in January 2008 and higher still in January 2009. The DfES will expect Dudley to take action to address the surplus places and, given the significant reductions in staffing at Cradley, on any drop in performance. Cradley High will start the financial year 2007/8 with a funding gap of around £494k based on a 2006/7 deficit of £194k and £300k less through fewer pupils. The governing body had not indicated in their response how this will be managed. On current pupil numbers and admission trends there will be a further significant budget reduction in 2008/9. Whilst the commitment of the governing body to keep the school open is not in question it is not clear how they propose to sustain the school until the Transforming Secondary Education strategy is fully developed.

60. The governing body is responsible for determining staffing and setting a balanced budget with the available resources. The consultation document refers to Cradley High's pupil teacher ratio (13.2:1) which in January 2006 was more favourable than the Dudley secondary average (15.6:1). The governing body response states that they acknowledge the impact of falling rolls on Cradley High. However, the budget set by the governing body for 2006/7 is projected to overspend by £120k on the delegated budget and a further £74k on the Leisure and Adult Education budget. Failure to balance the 2006/7 budget will require more significant action in 2007/8. The suggestion that "the Local Authority should have produced a Borough wide strategy identifying proposals for rectifying this issue" is surprising given the very high profile primary schools review, the admission numbers at Cradley over the last five years and at least two years of references to the impact of falling pupil numbers on school budgets.
61. Demographic information by ward is produced every year. Information is readily available on the Council website. The Transforming Secondary Education consultation is intended to promote debate about the principles on which a strategy for education in the Borough could be built. It is not about individual schools. Population data at ward level therefore is not relevant. Once the principles have been agreed and the focus moves to how the strategy should be implemented population and other data will be essential.
62. The Transforming Secondary Education consultation is not a strategic review of secondary schools.

63. The proposals to close Cradley have not been formulated because of concerns about performance or outcomes for pupils. The school is unable to afford the educational provision that pupils are entitled to.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

It is considered that a compelling case for the closure of Cradley High School is in existence.

The case for closure of the school is based on a reduction in the demand for school places by almost 20% over the last decade which is now impacting on secondary schools across the Borough. Cradley High School has seen admission numbers to Year 7 fall for five consecutive years. The 2006/7 budget is expected to be a deficit of around £194k. The reduction in pupils by around 100 compared with 2006/7 means that the 2007/8 budget will have around £300k less. The school will start the financial year 2007/8 with a funding gap of around £494k. Significant staff reductions will impact severely on the quality of education provided, outcomes and standards achieved. The school is no longer viable. It is not in the interests of any community, especially Cradley to be served by a school which can no longer meet local needs. The proposals are consistent with Dudley Council's School Organisation Plan 2003-8 commitment to address surplus capacity and create a new pattern of provision where all schools are effective and sustainable.

Throughout this process objectors have demonstrated commitment to maintaining a secondary school for the community of Cradley. There have also been a range of criticisms about aspects of the process. There has been no challenge to key data about falling demand for pupil places. Equally there has been no challenge regarding the severe financial difficulties faced by the school and the implications for quality of educational provision and standards. No alternatives to the proposals have emerged.

The case for closure of Cradley High, based on the clear link between falling pupil numbers, lower budgets and the adverse impact on quality of education, outcomes and standards is compelling. The proposals will enable all pupils to attend other secondary schools with a greater number of well trained staff and access to a broader range of opportunities and better facilities. Existing and intending pupils of Cradley High can be confidently expected to receive as good as or better overall provision at other secondary schools. The quality of education across the area will be improved with better outcomes and higher standards for all pupils.