Summary of the early engagement questionnaire on the proposed relocation of the Bearwood Primary School

Period: 1 September to 1 October 2026

Total participants: 226 responses

Overall findings

- **152 respondents (67%) opposed relocation**, including 135 (60%) who strongly opposed.
- **65 (29%) supported relocation**, including 48 (21%) who strongly supported.
- In contrast, **115 (51%) supported the specialist base**, while 33 (15%) opposed it.
- The most prevalent free-text themes were:
    - Community impact
    - Transport, distance or traffic
    - Equality and accessibility
    - School places and housing growth
    - Staff, facilities or delivery
    - Specialist-base issues

Survey questions

Which of the following best describes you?

This was multi-select:

- Local resident: **146 (65%)**
- Other: **32 (14%)**
- Parent/carer of a current Bearwood pupil: **26 (12%)**
- Parent/carer of a future pupil: **24 (11%)**
- Parent/carer of a child with SEND: **22 (10%)**
- Representative of another school: **8 (4%)**
- Bearwood staff member: **3 (1%)**

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- Four respondents did not answer.

Where a typed answer was requested, thirty-two respondents (14%) supplied an "Other" description. These included family connections, current or former residents, former pupils, education staff, governors or volunteers, and community or local-government representatives.

Note that the term "local resident" was used by respondents living across the borough.

Support or opposition to relocating Bearwood Primary School

Response	Number	All respondents
Strongly oppose	135	60%
Tend to oppose	17	8%
Neither	7	3%
Tend to support	17	8%
Strongly support	48	21%
Don't know	2	1%

Please tell us the reasons for your answer — relocation

There were **201 substantive responses (89%)**. Opposition focused on:

- Losing a walkable local school and weakening Bearwood/Winnersh community identity.
- Longer journeys, car dependency, congestion, road safety and emissions.
- Future school-place demand arising from proposed housing developments.
- Disruption to children's routines, friendships, wellbeing and educational continuity.
- Practical effects on working families, siblings and children with SEND or medical needs.
- Doubts about cost, evidence, site suitability and whether relocation is the best solution.

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Supporters referred principally to modern facilities, additional capacity around Spencers Wood/Shinfield, retention of staff, and opportunities for improved SEND provision.

What do you think are the main benefits of relocating the school?

155 respondents (69%) answered. Identified benefits included:

- Modern, purpose-built facilities and improved learning or outdoor space.
- Additional school capacity nearer housing growth.
- Expanded SEND provision.
- Potential operational efficiencies and reduced maintenance costs.
- Possible improvements to access or road safety for families living nearer the new site.

However, a substantial strand (approximately half of all responses made) said there were **no benefits**, or that any benefits would accrue mainly to Spencers Wood rather than existing Bearwood families.

What concerns, if any, do you have about relocating the school?

177 respondents (79%) answered. Concerns closely mirrored the reasons for opposition: transport, school capacity, disruption to children and staff, community loss, equality impacts, site suitability, cost and implementation risk.

Effect of the proposed transport arrangements

Effect	Number	All respondents
Very negatively	72	32%
Negatively	21	9%
No impact	29	13%
Positively	7	3%
Very positively	19	8%

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Effect	Number	All respondents
Not applicable	72	32%
No answer	6	3%

Overall, **93 respondents (41%)** anticipated a negative effect, compared with 26 (12%) anticipating a positive effect.

Suitability of free transport for at least three years

Response	Number	All respondents
Very unsuitable	97	43%
Unsuitable	38	17%
Neither	19	8%
Suitable	21	9%
Very suitable	31	14%
Don't know	14	6%
No answer	6	3%

Thus, **135 respondents (60%) considered the arrangements unsuitable**, compared with 52 (23%) who considered them suitable.

Challenges with the proposed transport arrangements

Concerns included:

- Longer distances and school days, loss of walking or cycling to school, and increased congestion and emissions.
- Uncertainty about routes, stops, capacity, supervision, timetables and late-running arrangements.
- The three-year period being too short for some current pupils and siblings.

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- Safeguarding and suitability for young children.
- Particular difficulties for neurodiverse or anxious children and those with medical needs.
- Parents' ability to reach school promptly following illness, emergencies or equipment failure.
- Cost to the council, taxpayers and families after funding ends.

Suggestions to address transport challenges

133 respondents (59%) answered. Suggestions included:

- Retaining Bearwood at its existing site.
- Providing transport for the remainder of every affected child's primary education.
- Multiple routes, collection points and departure times.
- Escorts, suitable restraints and trained staff for SEND or medical needs.
- Transport compatible with breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and activities.
- A phased or dual-site transition.
- Road, parking, crossing and active-travel improvements.
- Alternative school sites or expansion of existing provision.

Likelihood that a child remains at Bearwood

- Less likely: **35 (16%)**
- More likely: **6 (3%)**
- No difference: **5 (2%)**
- Don't know: **12 (5%)**
- Not applicable: **144 (64%)**
- No answer: **24 (11%)**

Among respondents giving a directional answer, relocation was much more likely to reduce than increase retention.

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Support for the specialist base

Response	Number	All respondents
Strongly support	89	39%
Tend to support	26	12%
Neither	56	25%
Tend to oppose	9	4%
Strongly oppose	24	11%
Don’t know	18	8%
No answer	4	2%

Support for additional specialist provision was therefore substantially stronger than support for relocation itself.

Please tell us the reasons for your answer — specialist base

129 respondents (57%) answered. Support reflected unmet demand for SEND places, specialist staffing and facilities, earlier intervention, and opportunities for inclusion alongside mainstream pupils.

Reservations generally concerned the proposed location and linkage to relocation—not necessarily the principle of specialist provision. Respondents requested clear evidence on demand, staffing, training, capacity, funding, accessibility and integration.

Opportunities or benefits from the specialist base

65 respondents (29%) provided comments. Anticipated benefits included:

- More local specialist places.
- Expert teaching, therapies and appropriately designed environments.
- Earlier and more tailored support.
- Flexible inclusion with mainstream peers.
- Better outcomes and wellbeing for children.

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- Reduced pressure on mainstream schools and families travelling outside the borough.

Concerns about the specialist base proposal

76 respondents (34%) provided comments. Concerns covered site and building suitability, traffic and taxi access, specialist recruitment, long-term funding, admissions and capacity, and the risk of displacing existing mainstream provision.

Current Bearwood site as a new special school

The possible retention or redevelopment of the current site for a special school or other SEND provision was raised.

Views were mixed. Some welcomed retaining an educational use and increasing specialist capacity. Others questioned whether the listed/current buildings could provide accessible, purpose-built facilities, or suggested retaining mainstream education there and placing new SEND provision at the proposed site.

What should the council consider before deciding?

170 respondents (75%) answered. Priorities were:

- Robust forecasts for mainstream and specialist places, including the impact of housing growth.
- Full transport and traffic modelling.
- Children's welfare and educational continuity.
- Equality impacts and accessibility.
- Site suitability and credible alternatives.
- Whole-life cost and funding.
- Transparent evidence, consultation and transition planning.
- Clear contingencies if pupil or staff numbers fall before relocation.

Impacts on particular groups

Frequently identified groups included children with SEND, neurodiverse or anxious children, children with medical needs, younger pupils, low-income households, families without cars, working parents, disabled people, siblings attending different schools, staff, and residents near both sites.

Spencers Wood community

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Comments identified potential benefits from a modern school, additional places, retained experienced staff and specialist facilities.

Negative impacts included additional traffic and parking pressure, road-safety concerns, possible effects on neighbouring schools, infrastructure pressure and concern that existing Bearwood pupils would occupy places intended for the growing Spencers Wood community.

Across all comments, community-related effects—covering Spencers Wood and the existing Bearwood/Winnersh community—were raised

AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone

AWE Burghfield, an "exclusion zone", emergency planning, evacuation or related risk was identified i**).** This is a reference to the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone around the Atomic Weapons Establishment Burghfield site. Although numerically limited, respondents raising it regarded it as a significant site-safety and emergency-planning issue requiring an explicit council response.

Financial impact

Financial matters were raised. Issues included construction and conversion costs, transport costs beyond three years, supervision and specialist staffing, value for money, pressure on council budgets, developer contributions, effects on taxpayers, and additional fuel, childcare or employment costs for families.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

62 respondents (27%) added final comments. These reiterated support for more SEND provision but also called for retention of local mainstream education, stronger place-planning evidence, safer and more accessible transport, meaningful consultation and a financially sustainable transition.

Demographic headings

- **Year of birth:** 144 answered (64%), ranging from 1938 to 2001. The largest reported age band was 65+, 47 respondents (21% of all respondents).
- **Place of residence:** 160 answered (71%). Winnersh accounted for 53 (24%), Shinfield 41 (18%), Wokingham 19 (8%), and Earley and Barkham 10 each (4% each).
- **Gender:** 101 female (45%), 49 male (22%), three unspecified (1%); 73 did not answer.
- **Race or ethnicity:** 105 identified as White British (46%); 123 respondents answered overall. The next largest group identified as "White: Other") (7

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respondents / 3% of the total). A further 7 (3%) responses from individuals identifying as belonging to four race or ethnicity categories were also received.

- **Religion:** 59 Christianity (26%), 41 no religion (18%); 116 answered.
- **Sexual orientation:** 92 heterosexual/straight (41%); 108 answered.
- **Sex/gender reassignment:** 101 answered "No" (45%); none answered "Yes".
- **Pregnancy/recent birth:** 10 answered "Yes" (4%).
- **Disability, long-term illness or health condition:** 26 answered "Yes" (12%), 77 "No" (34%) and nine preferred not to say (4%).
- **Nature of disability:** disclosures included musculoskeletal or mobility, mental-health or neurodevelopmental, neurological, sensory, respiratory/sleep-related and cardiovascular conditions.

Bottom line: respondents generally supported increasing specialist SEND capacity, but most did not accept that relocating Bearwood was the necessary or proportionate means of delivering it. The central decision-making issues are transport accessibility, future place sufficiency, community continuity, equality impacts, site safety and whole-life financial viability.

Summary produced with the assistance of MS CoPilot,

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