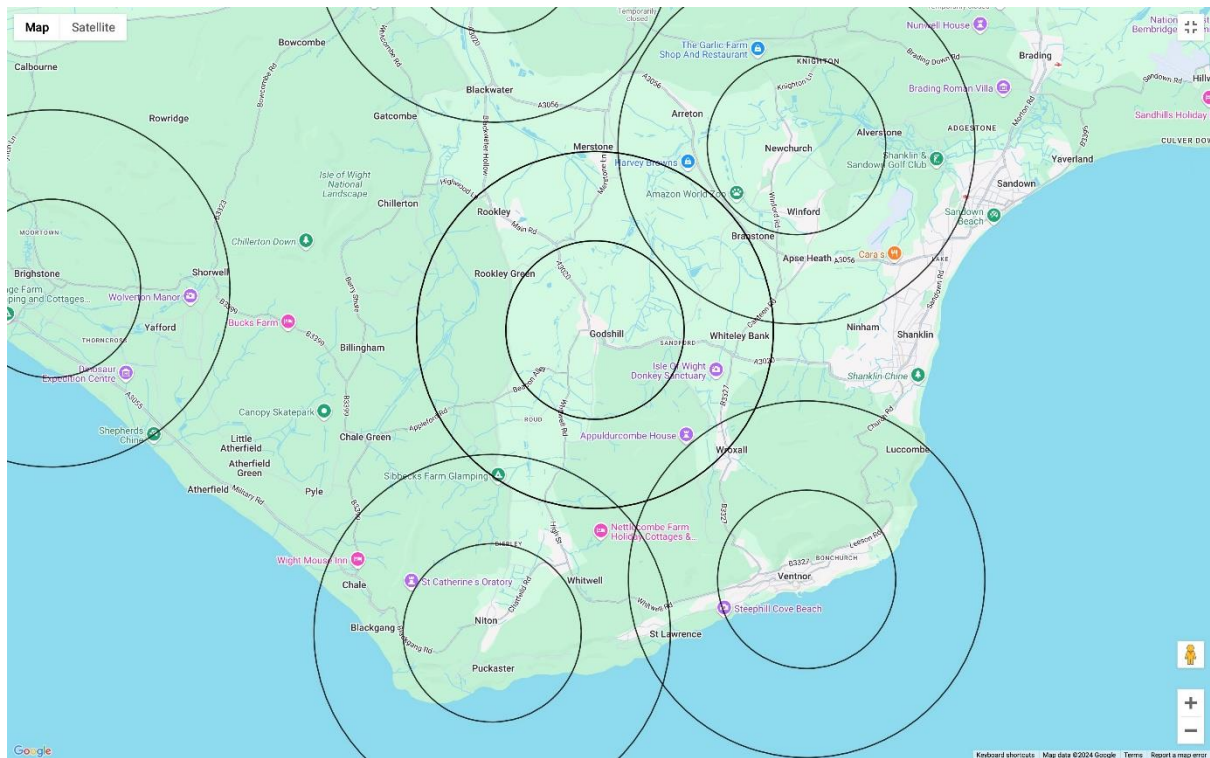


Alternative Proposal to the LA consultation to close Godshill Primary School (Central Rural Ward)

The Governing Body - Godshill Primary School

Context of Godshill Primary School in the Local Community



- Godshill Primary School is not merely a community school for the village of Godshill. It is the heart of the Central Rural Ward of the Island and is the designated school for both Chillerton and Rookley villages, and sister school to Barton Primary School with which it already shares resources, support staff, teaching expertise and an Executive Headteacher.
- The school has close links with Parish Councils in this area together with shared community resources such as Rookley Playing Fields and Godshill Central Mead, for multi-use activities.
- The school itself is used for Parish Council meetings, local community group meetings and events such as Godshill Matters, SBCOA, private functions throughout the year and community Christmas celebrations. The school has been instrumental in supporting the development of the brand new Accessibility

Playground on Central Mead in Godshill and holds regular support and drop- in sessions for other voluntary groups.

- As you will be aware, Godshill is identified as a Rural Service Centre in the Island Planning Strategy. It is the largest village on the Island. As such, it is identified as a priority location for housing development and growth, supported by both the Parish Council and the Local Community. The potential loss of Godshill Primary School will have a direct impact on the current and future development of the village and for Island families contemplating their long-term future. Unlike many other Rural Service Centres on the Island, Godshill is already delivering new affordable housing growth through the local company Captiva, which is both creating new, and supporting existing, demand and need for the school. Additional infrastructure is already being constructed by this company to improve walking access to and from the school and this was part of the planning application and the approval of that application by the Local Authority. Godshill School is integral to these local authority long term planning strategies and is in a strong position to serve the whole of the Central Rural area of the Island as part of the school place planning strategy as a one form entry primary school.

It is concerning that due diligence does not appear to have been rigorously employed across existing local authority plans critical to the implementation of this one and this needs to be addressed.

Concerns regarding outdated school place planning areas/ data transparency/faith and non-faith alternatives

- The school place planning areas underpinning this consultation were established over 10 years ago and do not reflect the current demographic or educational needs of the rural communities they serve.
- Godshill serves children from both Chillerton and Rookley and yet these areas are not included in the planning area for Godshill. The families of those children who transferred to the Godshill site following the merger of both schools last year, as part of the school planning agenda, were given a written guarantee that those children

would not be part of any further disruption during their primary education.

- The numbers for future planning shared with Godshill only include the Ventnor planning area. This is not accurate. Nor is it fit for purpose. The political boundaries have already changed. Arreton, Chiilerton and Rookley and Godshill are all in the Central Rural ward.
- It is essential that the local authority provides access to clear data on school place planning areas including dot maps showing where children currently live in relation to schools, for informed decisions to be made now and in the future. The planning areas need to be reviewed as a matter of urgency and transparency regarding this data should be paramount to ensure any proposal is based on current needs and realities.
- Godshill is the only local authority community primary school in the local area. All the suggested alternative schools are faith schools. This has no regard for the spiritual preferences of our families. Our parents are not only unhappy for their children to attend a faith school but also have concerns regarding the quality of education at these schools recommended to them by the local authority. Any fairness or equity has been removed from this process by the impact of academy schools not being included in these proposals. Again, due diligence has not been rigorously carried out.

Concerns regarding Pre-school provision

- Godshill Primary is currently a 2-11 primary school with the largest pre school provision in the rural area including Niton and St Francis which are not currently part of the closure proposal.
- Children attending our pre-school then transition seamlessly through our Early Years provision into Reception.
- If the school closes, how will families be guaranteed their pre-school children will have access to provision at the same school as their older siblings?
- Governors are keen to seek a viable compromise and have been in discussion with the well-established private pre-school provider at Arreton, St George's regarding the feasibility of re-locating to the

Godshill site to create a sustainable, viable pre-school provision attached to a one form entry primary school for the central rural area.

- This proposal would minimise staff redundancies across existing pre-school provision in the maintained sector and strengthen private/LA partnership working.
- It will improve cost effectiveness through future budget adjustments to a 4-11 one form entry primary across the central rural area with pre-school provision in the private sector but on-site to support effective early years transition.
- Godshill is situated on a main bus/road route through the Island and such a proposed Pre-school Hub would be accessible for local families and those in the surrounding area alike.

Viable alternative proposal for the rural centre of the Island

Before sanctioning Godshill school as part of this proposed closure, governors would ask that the following factors be considered.

1. The inclusion of Arreton, Godshill and Wroxall village primary schools in this proposal wipes out all primary provision in the rural centre of our Island for over 400 children.
2. As the former Stenbury Federation, Godshill, Chillerton and Rookley have already, this year, supported the local authority in reducing surplus places. Merging the two schools in the rural centre of the Island onto the Godshill site has ensured deficits accrued over time were reversed.
3. Both schools came in on budget at the end of the last financial year.
4. Under the Executive leadership of Mark Snow, both schools received recent GOOD judgements from Ofsted and since the merger of both schools onto one site, the number on role is showing an upward trajectory with 150 on roll 4-11 and 177 on roll including the pre school provision.
5. The children and families who joined Godshill from Chillerton and Rookley in January 2024 were assured in writing by the Isle of Wight council, that following that protracted consultation process, their children would not be subject to any further disruption during their primary education.

6. Godshill School has spent the past five years proactively supporting the local authority in addressing school place planning on the Island in general; and in our own schools in the rural centre of the Island in particular. We work collaboratively with Barton Primary school, sharing resources, staff and expertise.
7. We feel strongly that at least one school should serve our central rural communities and see this as an alternative proposal. We would like to enable the children currently at Arreton, Godshill and Wroxall to attend a rural hub of education within our local communities.

Amending this proposal to safeguard the possibility of one GOOD rural community school would enable small school cohorts to merge as one viable cohort within the rural area, incur less disruption for over 400 children and minimise the cost of transporting those 400 children to schools much further away.

Therefore, governors propose:

A one form entry GOOD Local Authority Community Primary School within the Central Rural area at Godshill.

This school would continue with the existing merged roles and services already in place with Barton Primary School, also recently judged as a GOOD school.

This would further reduce the number of schools by 2, reduce surplus places/staffing costs/ transport costs, keep rural cohorts together, provide a hub for EYFS with the possibility of a private provider on site.

We already have a track record and hard evidence of success in transforming RI schools to GOOD with an upward trajectory of improvement within in year progress and improving outcomes over time. We would also be a community alternative to the already existing faith schools

This alternative proposal would stand as an exemplar of how such a collaborative model could be rolled out across the Island over time as future school place planning measures become necessary.

