

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA



Tuesday 12 June 2018

at 4.00 pm

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Beck, Harrison, James, Lauderdale, Little, Moore and Trueman.

Co-opted Members: Jo Heaton, C of E Diocese and Stephen Hammond, RC Diocese representatives.

School Heads Representatives: Mark Tilling (Secondary), David Turner (Primary), Alan Chapman (Special).

Six Young Peoples Representatives

Observer: Councillor Thomas, Chair of Adult Services Committee

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on date 20 March 2018 (*previously circulated and published*).

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

No items.

5. KEY DECISIONS

No items.



6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Hart Primary School – Wall Collapse – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 6.2 Appointments to School Admissions Forum – *Legal and Democratic Services Team Manager*

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 Healthy Pupils Capital Fund – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.2 Fostering Annual Report 2017/18 – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*
- 7.3 Adoption Annual Report 2017/18 – *Director of Children’s and Joint Commissioning Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 17 July at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 June 2018



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Report of: Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: HART PRIMARY SCHOOL – WALL COLLAPSE

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 Non-key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To request that Children's Services Committee review the options and recommend an option to remedy a collapsed wall at Hart Primary School.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In March 2018, the western elevation wall at Hart Primary School partially collapsed.

3.2 A structural condition survey was commissioned detailed in **Appendix 1** – conclusion and recommendations can be found on page 7) which, in the opinion of the surveyor, concluded;

'....that the partial collapse of the wall was most likely as a result of storm damage (high winds). Taking account of the condition of the remaining wall section, we are of the opinion that it will also be susceptible to inclement weather, particularly where bulging and deterioration of the structure has occurred.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that the remaining wall section of the west boundary wall should be carefully taken down in its entirety".

3.3 The report further adds that *"Although the wall does not have any listed status nor is it situated in a Conservation Area, given its historical significance, consideration should be given to rebuilding the wall using the existing stone on new concrete foundations".*

4. PLANNING CONSENT

- 4.1 An initial meeting with the Council's Countryside and Heritage Officer confirmed that there are no restrictions on the wall, therefore the options detailed in section 5 below were submitted and considered at Planning One-Stop-Shop. The formal response is detailed in **Appendix 2**. Although no planning approval is required for any of the options, relevant consultees have provided comments and it has been recommended that advice be sought from Historic England. Additionally, Tees Archaeology have advised that they would like a professional assessment of the west wall if it is to be demolished. Any fencing on the east side would need Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England. Both consultees would prefer to see the western wall retained, and not to see any fencing installed at all. However, given the previous history of partial collapses it seems prudent to consider installing protective fencing to mitigate against the risk that any future collapse occurs when the enclosed field is occupied.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 Various options have been considered. These are detailed in the table below and estimated costs are also detailed within **confidential Appendix 3 and Appendix 3a for illustration purposes. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.**

Options	Description
Option 1	Demolish the western boundary (stone wall), regrade the slope and replace with railings
Option 1a	Demolish the western boundary (stone wall), regrade the slopes and replace with railings; provide railings offset from northern and eastern boundaries (<i>school's preferred option</i>)
Option 2	Rebuild the western boundary (stone wall) and provide railings offset from western, northern and eastern boundaries
Option 3	Rebuild the western boundary (stone wall) and provide railings offset from northern and eastern boundaries only
Option 4	Rebuild the western boundary (stone wall) including a retaining wall element

6. SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE (SECURITY/SAFEGUARDING/SAFETY)

- 6.1 The school has risk assessed the options. Due to the serious nature of the incident that could have been a potentially fatal accident, and the lack of indications that the wall would fall, the school advises that it needs to manage

the risk (as per the DfE guidance that cites: 'the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to:

- assess the risks to staff and others affected by school activities in order to identify the health and safety measures that are necessary and, in certain circumstances, keep a record of the significant findings of that assessment;
- introduce measures to manage those risks (risk management).

- 6.2 The risk management to ensure that the wall is not able to fall onto pupils aged 3-11 and school staff is to put a perimeter fence in place on the inside of all of the boundary walls. The retaining wall that the survey says needs to be taken down completely can be replaced with a perimeter fence. The school would be happy for the other two walls (south and east) to be replaced with a perimeter fence too, but are happy to compromise. If it is preferred to keep the other two walls (south and east) in place then an inner perimeter fence will need to be installed at an appropriate distance from these walls, with appropriate access for maintenance. School are happy for the height of the fence not to be extended above the height of the wall to compromise with the desire to maintain the aesthetics of the wall. External evaluation such as Health and Safety inspections and Ofsted safeguarding inspections would expect the school to have risk management in place to manage the safety of the wall. The installation of a perimeter fence on the inside of all of the perimeter walls would, in the school's view, fulfil these requirements. Ultimately school want to ensure that all pupils and staff are safe – this is the paramount concern above the 'look' of the boundary of the school field. School are also concerned to ensure that the boundary is cost effective in both the short term and the long term – ensuring funding is spent appropriately.

7. ESTATES PERSPECTIVE

- 7.1 The western wall is not in fact a boundary wall (except where it adjoins the garden to Manor Cottage) as the school land extends as far as the adopted road. There is therefore some flexibility in where any fence is placed. The other walls (south and east) are boundary walls and may be party structures such that the adjoining owner shares responsibility and an interest in them. However, this cannot be confirmed either way at present.
- 7.2 With regard to the ongoing academisation process (see section 10 below), the model lease set out in government guidance clearly places responsibility for any future repairs on the academy trust as lessee, albeit that there is no liability to rectify defects existing before the start of the lease. No repair liability is placed on the Council as lessor. Given that this is the arrangement followed in all other academy conversions in Hartlepool, and that the Council will no longer have any funding for the school, these provisions should be applied in the usual way in this case and the responsibility for future repair of the walls must fall to the academy trust.

8. SALE OF ADJOINING LAND

- 8.1 In 1997, an area of land was sold by the Council to the residents of Manor Cottage. The Land Registry documents identify part of the affected (west) wall constitutes the boundary to Manor Cottage but remains the responsibility of the Council.

9. FUNDING AVAILABLE

- 9.1 Each year, a contingency fund is set aside for emergency works for the maintained sector school estate. The funding has been reduced over recent years as schools have converted to academy status and are no longer the responsibility of the local authority. The funding available is detailed in **confidential Appendix 3 and Appendix 3a for illustration purposes. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.**

10. SCHOOL ACADEMISATION

- 10.1 Hart Primary School is in the process of converting to academy status. However, the incident occurred before the academy order was received by the local authority. Although confirmation of funding has not been communicated to the school, DfE guidance advises that local authorities should look favourably on those schools converting where works have been previously identified (before conversion).

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Members are reminded of the safety considerations if the wall is not taken down, repaired or re-built.

12. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 A contingency fund may be required to address any further emergency works in maintained schools should the need arise during the remainder of the 2018/19 financial year. In previous years, the Council has been required to call upon this contingency funding and so it would be prudent to ensure that all of the contingency funding is not spent at this early point in the financial year.

13. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

13.1 There are no legal considerations in this matter.

14. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

14.1 There are no child and family poverty considerations.

15. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

15.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations.

16. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

16.1 There are no staff considerations.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 Members are recommended to:

- a. note and consider the contents of this report and its appendices, including the options available as outlined in section 5
- b. indicate a preferred option to remedy the situation.

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 There are no background papers.

19. CONTACT OFFICER

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Report on Boundary Walls

18T1183 – Hart Primary School, Magdalene Drive,
Hartlepool, TS27 3AP.

Billingham George & Partners
Civil & Structural Engineers, Building Surveyors
Wellington House, Wellington Court, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3TA
T: 01642 876 470 E: consulting@bgp-teesside.co.uk  @BGPconsulting

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Appendix A – Photographs

Property Address Hart Primary School
Magdalene Drive
Hartlepool
TS27 3AP

Client Hartlepool Borough Council

Date of Inspection 21st March 2018

1 Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Mr S Wilkie on behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council.

Billinghurst George & Partners have been instructed to undertake an inspection of the stone built boundary/retaining wall to Hart Primary School, Magdalene Drive, Hartlepool, TS27 3AP. The purpose of the survey was to investigate the structural condition of the wall, and to prepare a report, recommending remedial action or other works deemed appropriate.

In addition, we were also requested to comment on the stability/condition of the wall that formed part of the original School Room, which is situated near to the front entrance of the main school building.

1.1 Limitations

The survey has been predominantly visual. We have not inspected any parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are therefore unable to report that any such part of the wall is free from defect. No testing, or opening up of buried sections of the structure was made. Where such works are considered necessary to obtain better preliminary information, then this is indicated later in the report.

This report is not a comprehensive assessment of individual defects, but rather follows the brief, and is a document highlighting the major issues likely to affect the structure and stability of the boundary/retaining wall.

Our comments on any causation of damage are based only on visual inspections that have been carried out at this stage and would be subject to review in the light of further information being made available at a later date.

The report shall be for the benefit of the addressee only. We accept no liability to any other party who may seek to rely upon the whole, or any part of this report.

The inspection was undertaken on the 21st March 2018.

1.2 Brief Description

The boundary wall is of random stone construction, which appears to be constructed of two separate leafs of stone, with tie cross-stones and a rubble/mortar filled inner core. Stone copings are provided to the head of the wall.

The wall acts as a retaining structure to the higher ground levels to the western and northern boundaries. The maximum height of the wall is to the western boundary, which is approximately 2100mm as measured from the lower side onto the playing field of the school. The height to the retained side of the wall is in the region of 900mm. To the northern and eastern boundaries, the height of the wall varies between 1600mm – 1900mm. Generally, the overall wall thickness is in the region of 300mm -350mm.

The wall which formed part of the original School Room, is also of random stone construction. The overall height is in the region of 1m, and the length just over 2m. A slate plaque is fitted to the outer face giving details of its construction date.



Photograph showing a general view of the northern boundary wall section

2.0 Observations

2.1 West Boundary Wall

To the most northern section, a significant part (12-15m) of the wall has collapsed onto the playing field of the school. Much of the collapsed wall remains fairly intact on the ground where it has fallen. There are some areas of displaced/loose stone, however; this is most likely due to impact damage. *(Shown in Photograph 01)*

Where the wall has collapsed, the retained ground remains in-situ, with no evidence of any significant movement, slip or displacement. *(Shown in Photograph 02)* This suggests that the retained ground has not been instrumental in causing the damage/collapse of the wall structure.

The wall sections immediately adjacent to the collapsed section were found to be intact, and overall are in a reasonably stable condition.

Some significant bulging/outward movement was noted to the wall, particularly where trees/vegetation are located. This emanated from around 200-300mm mm above the level of the field, and propagated up the wall, to the stone coping. The most pronounced amount of outward movement was estimated to be in excess of 250mm. *(Shown in Photograph 03)*

To the west side of the wall, there are also some isolated areas of masonry that have become dislodged, and have fallen away from the wall structure, exposing the inner core. *(Shown in Photograph 04)*

Significant areas of mortar pointing were also noted to have deteriorated, and are either loose, or have fallen away from the wall. Where repointing has been carried out, this is of a poor quality workmanship, and has been undertaken using inappropriate materials for this type of construction.

In addition, some of the upper courses/copings are either dislodged, or loose. Other areas are dislodged due to significant vegetation growth, leaving the remaining upper sections/copings in a precarious condition.

2.2 North Boundary Wall

There was no evidence of any significant leaning/bulging, and overall this wall section is considered to be in a reasonable structural condition. There are a number of isolated areas of missing stone, and weathered pointing, which is allowing the deterioration of the mortar to the inner core. *(Shown in Photograph 05)*

Some sections of coping were noted to be dislodged, or loose. Within these areas, mortar pointing was also noted to have deteriorated, leaving open joints where rainwater can penetrate the wall structure.

2.3 East Boundary Wall

Generally, the east boundary wall appears to be in a reasonable structural condition, with no evidence of any significant bulging, movement or indication of foundation/ground movement.

There is a section of the wall which appears to have been subject to repair/reconstruction, and repointing. Although there was no evidence of any structural issues to this section of the wall, signs of frost damage/breakdown was noted to the lime based mortar pointing. (*Shown in Photograph 06*) In addition, some sections of mortar pointing are cracked/dislodged due to vegetation growth. (*Shown in Photograph 07*)

The damaged/defective mortar will need to be raked out and replaced, in order to ensure the overall structural stability of the wall.

2.4 Original School Room Wall Section

The remaining section of the School Room wall is in a very poor condition. There appears to have been very little maintenance undertaken, and there are areas of loose/displaced stone, and deteriorated pointing, to both the external faces and inner core. (*Shown in Photographs 08 & 09*)

3.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Based on the findings of our survey, we are of the opinion that on the whole, the boundary wall structures to the north and east are considered to be in a reasonable condition, requiring only localised repairs consisting mostly of replacing displaced stones, reinstating copings, and localised repointing.

These works should be undertaken within the immediate future, to prevent any further deterioration of the wall structures. The type of mortar used to partially reconstruct and repoint should be an NHL 3.5 lime/sand mix, which is compatible with the strength and porosity of the stone.

In respect of the west boundary wall, we are of the opinion that the partial collapse of the wall was most likely as a result of storm damage (high winds). Taking account of the condition of the remaining wall section, we are of the opinion that it will also be susceptible to inclement weather, particularly where bulging and deterioration of the structure has occurred.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that the remaining section of the west boundary wall should be carefully taken down in its entirety.

Although, the wall does not have any Listed status, or is situated in a Conservation Area, given its historical significance, consideration should be given to rebuilding the wall using the existing stone on new concrete foundations, with concrete blockwork/reinforcement to retain the higher ground. This should also incorporate the provision of adequate drainage to prevent lateral water pressure building up against the wall, from the higher retained ground level.

Alternatively, the remaining section of the wall could be demolished. The land could then be graded back to a suitable level to correspond with that of the playing field and a new timber boundary fence/posts erected.

With regards the section of School Room wall, we are of the opinion that the wall should be repointed. The inner core should then be filled using a lime based grout. Any loose stones to the top/sides of the wall should also be rebbed/secured. A soft capping (soil & grass) should then be placed over the top of the wall to provide weather protection and to prevent rainwater percolating into the wall structure.

We trust that we have correctly interpreted your instructions and have accurately reported on this property; however, should you require any further clarification of any details, please do not hesitate to contact the writer.



A Crosby MRICS C Build E MCABE
Chartered Building Surveyor
For and on behalf of Billingham George & Partners



Appendix A - Photographs



Photograph 01



Photograph 02



Photograph 03



Photograph 04



Photograph 05



Photograph 06



Photograph 07



Photograph 08



Photograph 09



Email: developmentcontrol@hartlepool.gov.uk

Our Ref: I/2018/0080

Your Ref:

Contact Officer: Laura Chambers ☎ 01429 523273

04 May 2018

MR STEVEN WILKIE
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
CIVIC CENTRE
HARTLEPOOL
TS24 8AY

Dear Sir/Madam

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

LOCATION: Hart Primary School Magdalene Drive Hart Hartlepool

PROPOSAL: Demolition and replacement of wall on western boundary

I refer to your informal enquiry received on 17/04/2018.

The Council operates a system of involving all relevant departments and a number of outside agencies to give comprehensive advice on any development proposal (The One Stop Shop Initiative). The advice below is based entirely on the information you have provided.

1. Planning Legislation

Based on the information provided I can confirm that planning permission is not required for the above mentioned proposal. However, as the site includes part of the scheduled site of the medieval fishponds, the new fence and possibly the wall repairs will require Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England. It is recommended you contact Lee McFarlane from Historic England's Newcastle office for further guidance (lee.mcfarlane@historicengland.org.uk).

In addition, Tees Archaeology have advised that medieval stonework has been identified in the wall fabric during previous repairs and therefore they would require an assessment of the wall fabric by a professional archaeologist, in order to identify any further examples. For further information please contact Rachel Grahame at rachel.grahame@hartlepool.gov.uk

Notwithstanding the advice about in relation to the need for planning permission, the following advice is provided from relevant consultees:

Heritage & Countryside Manager

The walls within Hart are characteristic of this village and therefore I would prefer to see the wall retained. This should be done by carefully taking down the wall and rebuilding it.

Looking at the options I can't understand the rationale behind some of them i.e. option 1 suggests replacing the wall with a fence but does not propose fencing off the other walls, whereas options 2 and 3 seem to suggest this is necessary – was the structural report for all of the walls or only the wall where there have been issues?

My preferred option would be to see the wall repaired, along with the other walls if necessary and no fencing installed. I would agree [...] that the installation of a fence will inevitably make maintenance difficult and could result in further problems down the line if all of the walls cannot be easily checked and maintained.

Tees Archaeology

I would agree [...] that we would prefer to see the western wall retained and not to see any fencing at all; if all the walls are to be repaired and made safe, installing fencing as well seems unnecessary.

Public Protection

The proposals would create a 4m wide dead space between the existing wall and proposed fence line; this could become a maintenance issue, potentially a littered and overgrown.

Countryside Access Officer

I would question the lack of planning about the permissive access points/gates onto the playing field by local residents. They have an access point from Butts Lane onto the field and should have access from the car park, east of the school but the proposed fencing in the south east corner does not address this.

Can you ask the school if they will be continuing to allow public access from the car park to the field, outside school hours?

Arboricultural Officer

The group of mature trees running alongside the farm track on the Western side of the school are an important feature to this part of the village and there are two large Sycamore trees near to Manor Cottage that will be affected if the original wall alignment is kept as in Option 2. That said it is just the wall around the two trees that I am concerned about and a deviation to the alignment here would suffice. I have previously discussed this with Tony Watson (Architectural Technician/CAD Manager R&N - BUILDING DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION) expressing my concerns about the tree issues.

I have no objection to any of these options providing that the issues that I have mentioned are taken into account.

Whilst every effort has been made to identify the consents that will be required before the project can proceed, I cannot confirm that this list is exhaustive and this

letter does not constitute a legal determination under any relevant legislation. The advice is given in good faith but without prejudice to the formal consideration of any future planning application. You should consider whether you need independent advice from a planning or legal consultant. You should also note that a binding decision can only be gained by way of a planning application or an application under s192 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 for a certificate from the Council stating that the proposed development would be lawful and would not therefore need planning permission.

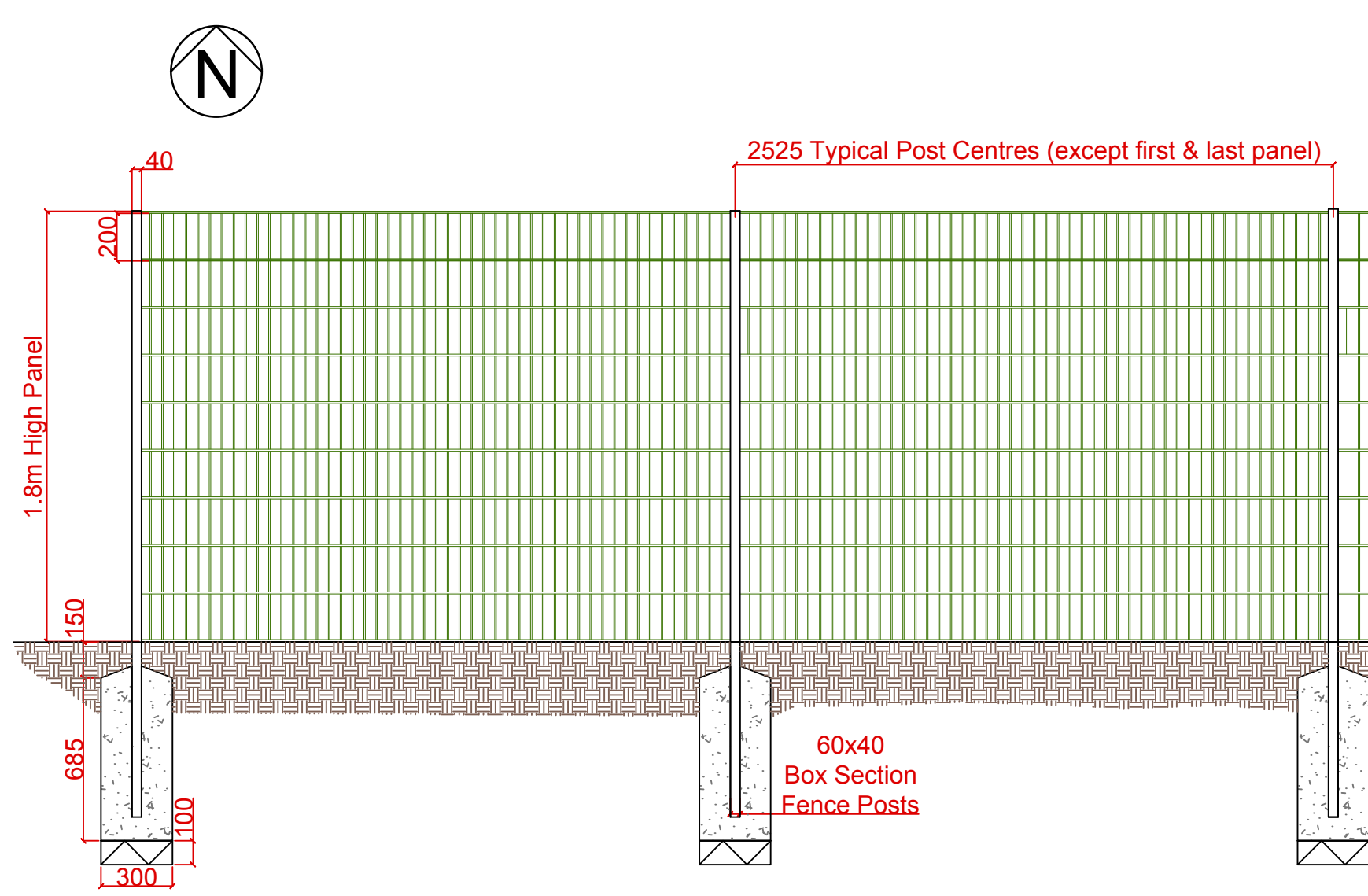
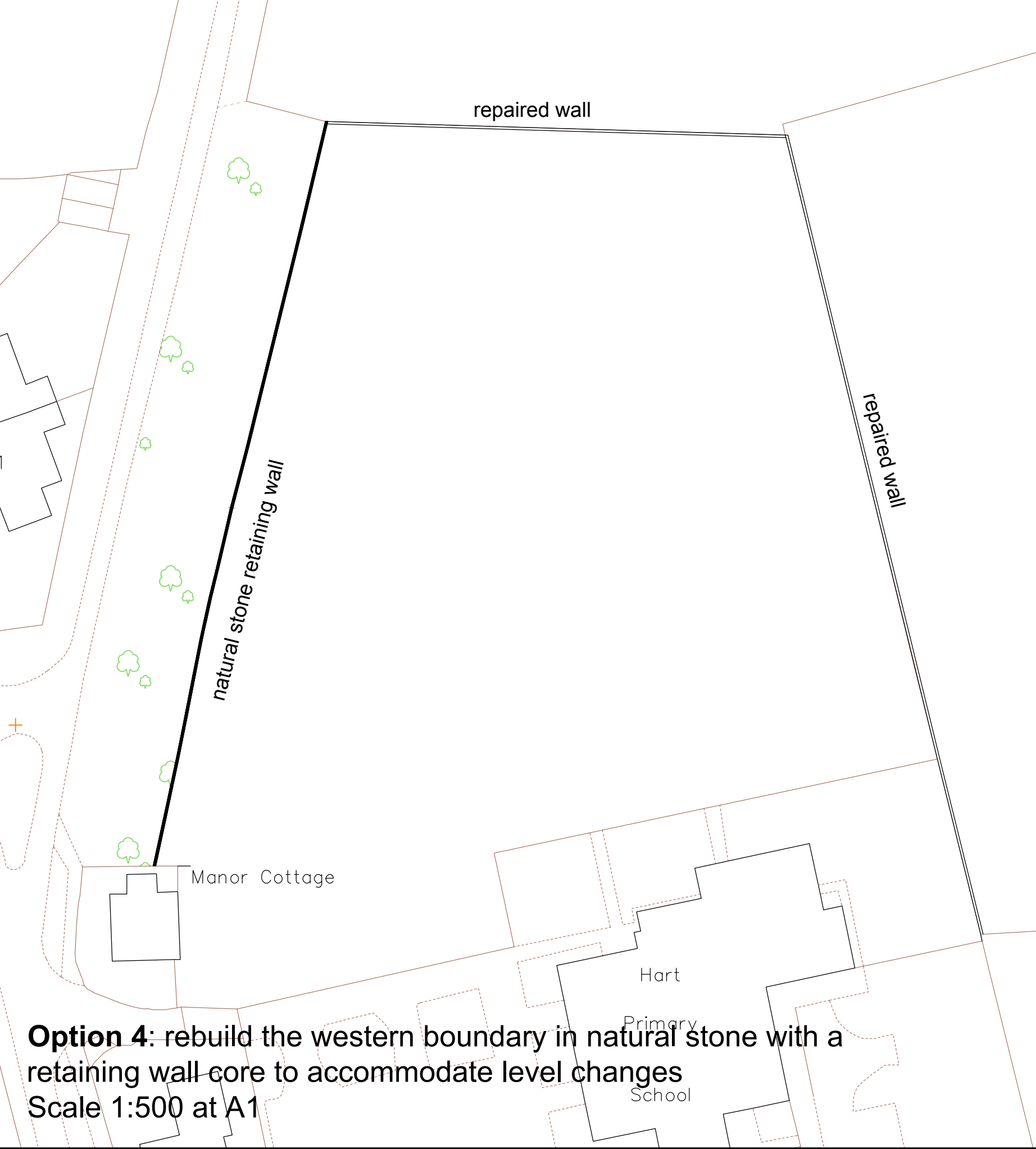
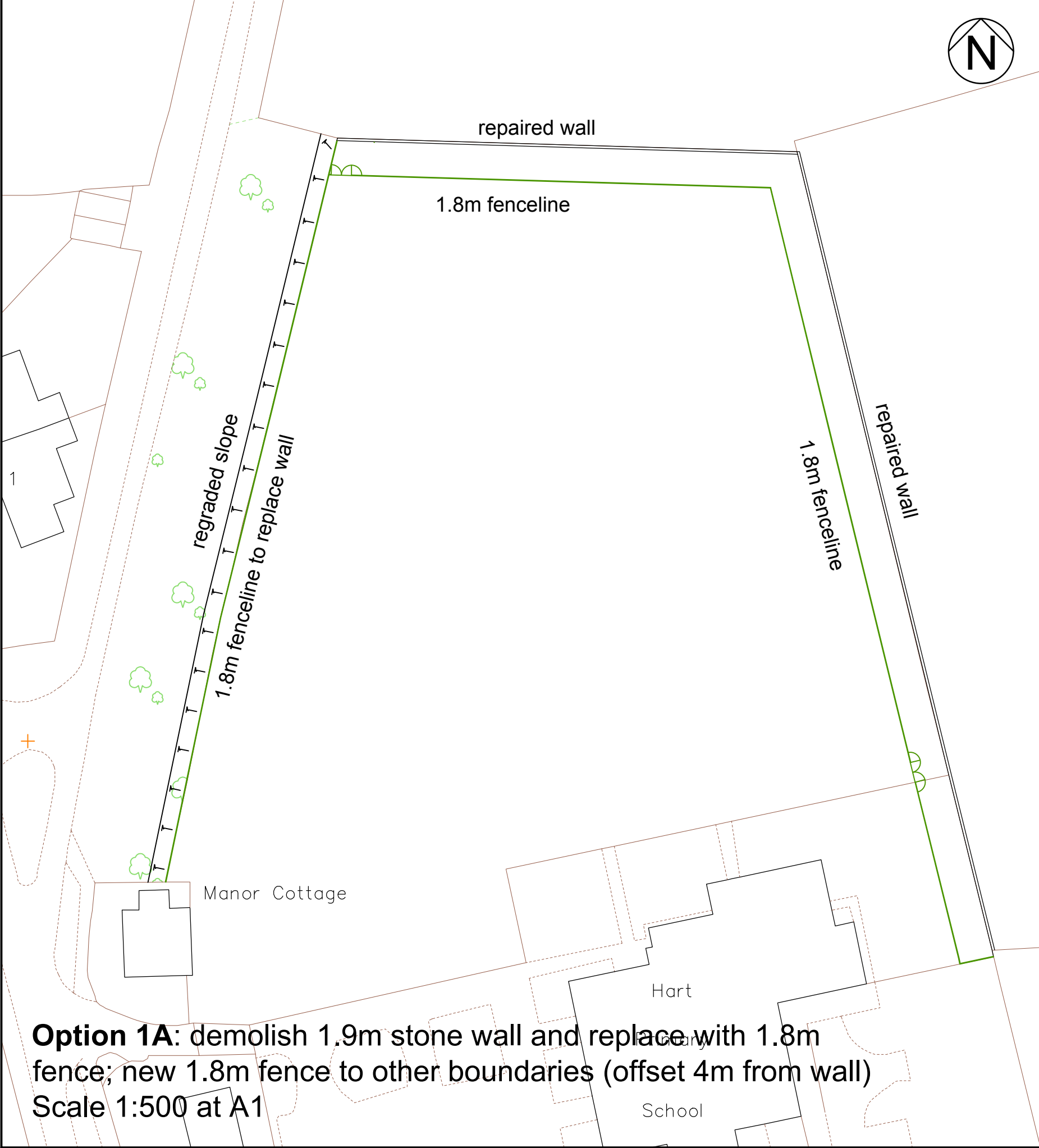
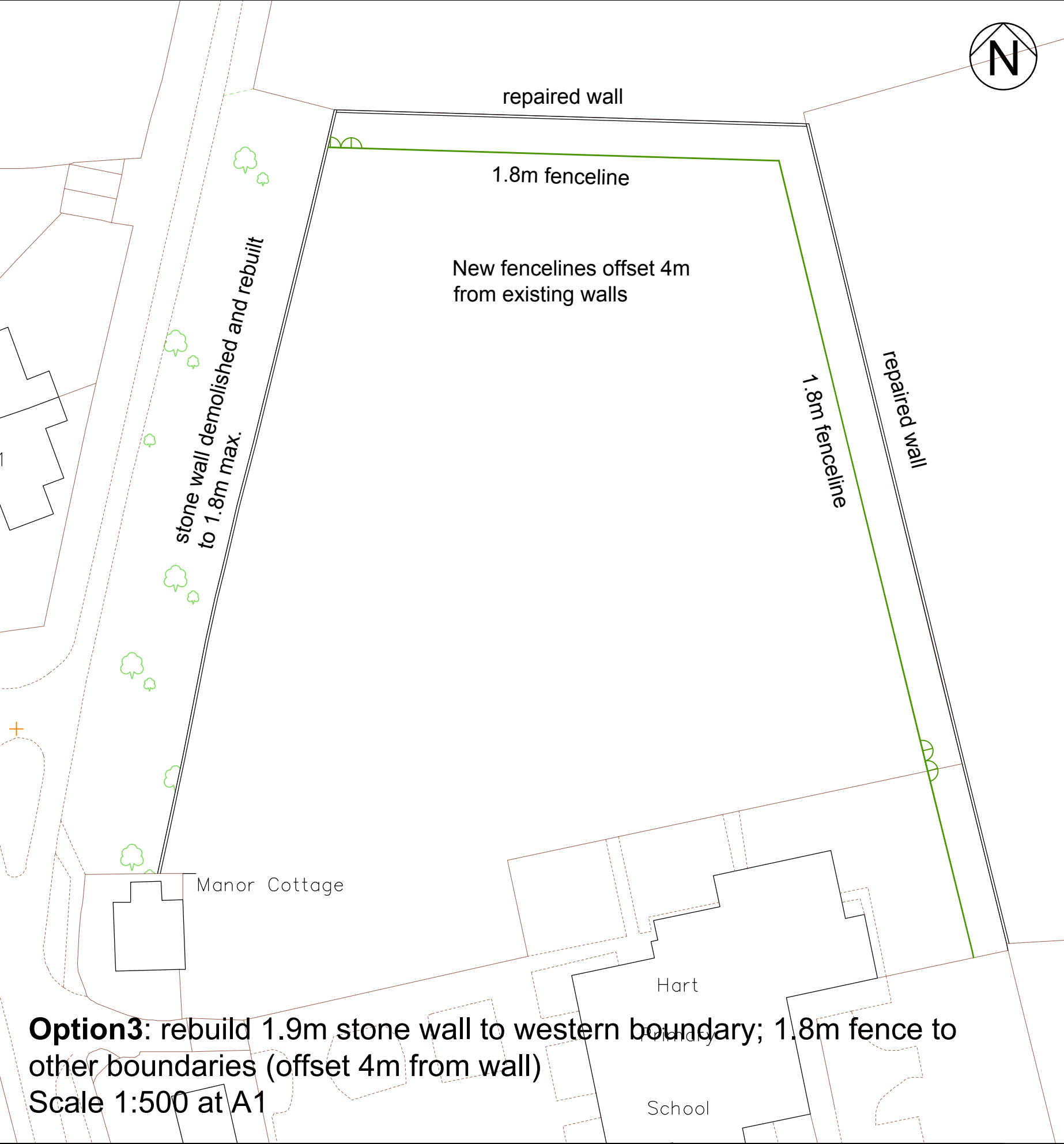
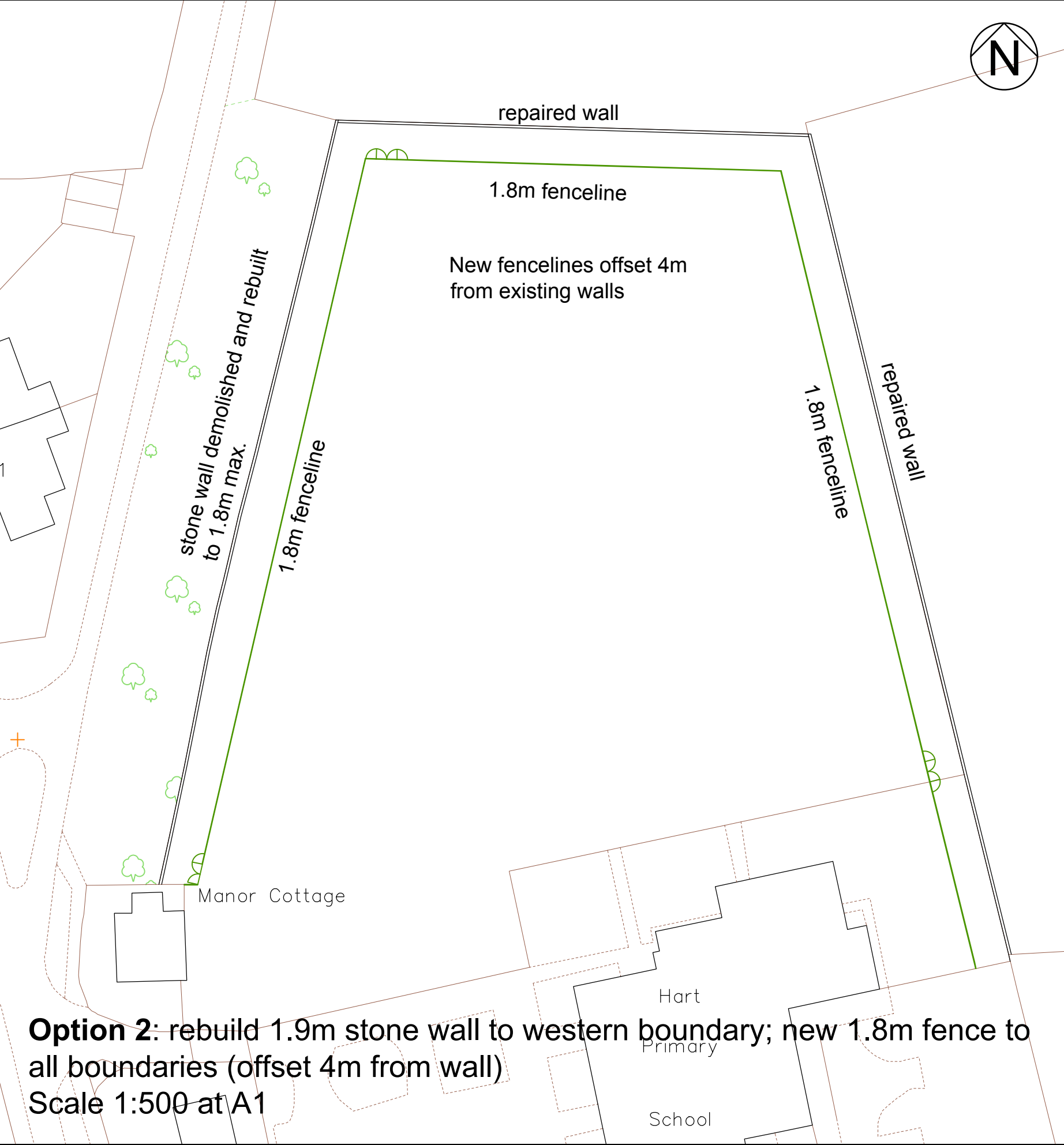
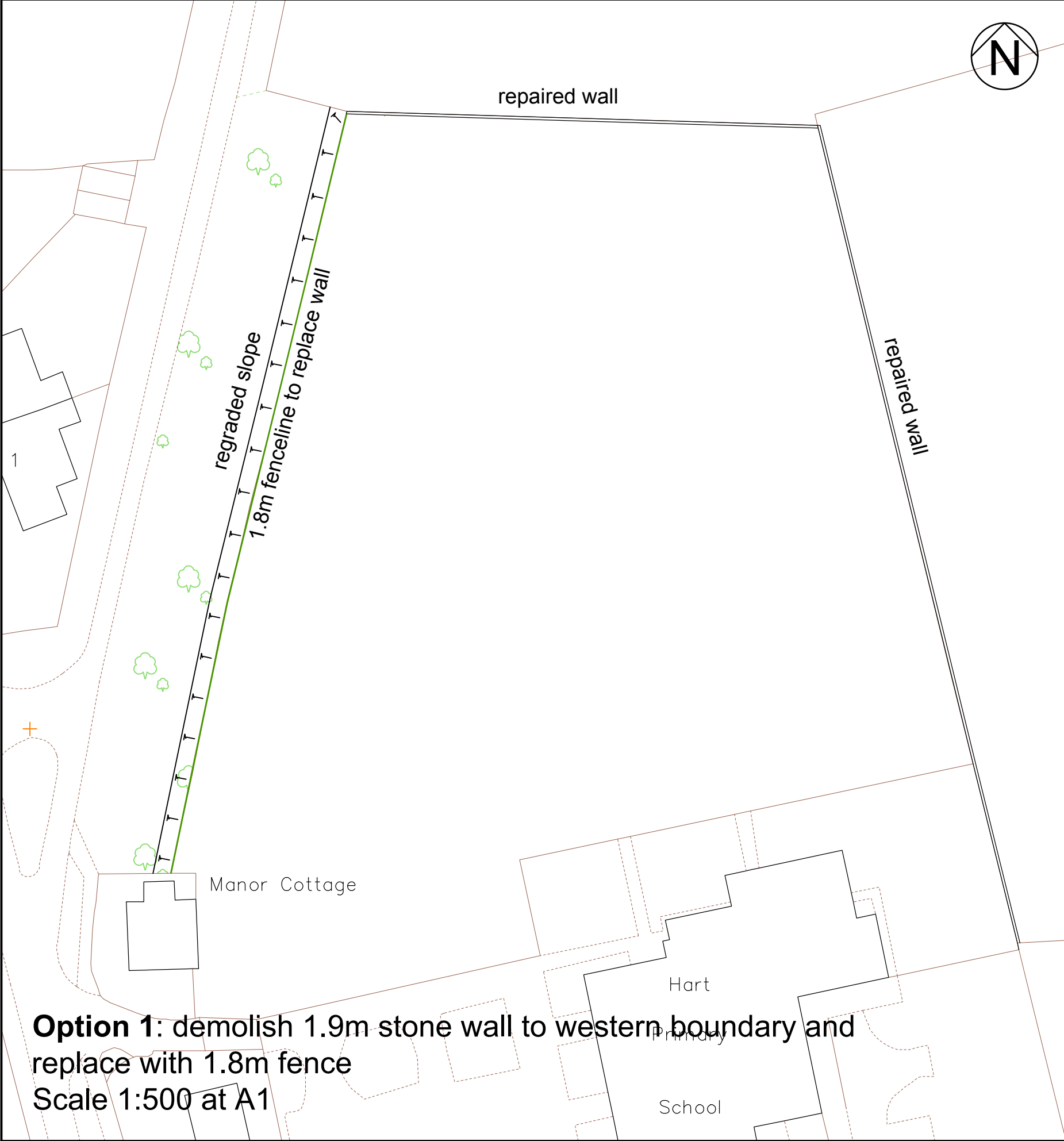
Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to call me.

Finally, please let us know if you have any special requirements (e.g. Braille, translator, large print or signer etc.) and we will try to help.

Yours faithfully,

Laura Chambers
Senior Planning Officer

Options for illustrative purposes - Children's Services Committee 12 June 2018




Scale 1:25 at A1

MasterView Twin 1.8m mesh fencing system

MasterView Twin : 1.8m
Panel height: 1800mm
Panel width: 2506mm
Mesh size: 200mm x 50mm with twin horizontal wires
Horizontal wire: 2mm x 6mm
Vertical wire: 5mm
Fixing clips: 7
Posts 60 x 60mm square sections supplied with plastic cap in top to prevent water ingress

1.2m high option - non standard type, therefore all panels and posts are special order items

PRELIMINARY

Rev	Amendment	Date
 HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL		
REGENERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR: Denise Ogden		
NEIGHBOURHOODS DIVISION Colin Bolton Building Design & Construction Manager Civic Centre Hartlepool TS24 8AY TEL: 01429 266522 FAX: 01429 523899		
Client Education		
Project Hart PS Boundary Wall Reinstatement		
Title Hart PS Wall Reinstatement Options		
Drawn	Scale 1:500 at A1	Date
Drawing No. 714-31F L001	Rev. B	

DWG. LAST UPDATED DATE: 17/05/2018 TIME: 09:42

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 June 2018



Report of: LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES TEAM
MANAGER

Subject: APPOINTMENT TO SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non-key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek Elected Member nominations from within the membership of the Children's Services Committee to the School Admissions Forum.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Schools Admissions Forum forms part of the Council's Outside Bodies and considers existing and proposed admission arrangements and how they serve the interests of local children and parents; aim to reach local agreement on any new or controversial issues; consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the Education Authority's admissions literature and information for parents; consider and approve local co-ordinated arrangements; promote more modern and parent-friendly admissions processes.

As Members are aware the Chair of the Committee is a self-selecting appointment to the Admissions Forum and the Committee are asked to nominate two additional Elected Members from within the membership of the Committee to the Forum. For information, the representatives on the Forum for 2017/18 were:

Councillors Alan Clark (Chair of the Children's Services Committee)*;
Councillors Brenda Harrison and Kaylee Sirs.

* Self-selecting appointment

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That in addition to the appointment of the Chair of the Children's Services Committee to the Schools' Admission Forum, nominations are sought for the remaining two places on the Forum from within the membership of the Committee.

5. CONTACT OFFICERS

Amanda Whitaker
Legal and Democratic Services Team Manager
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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 June 2018



Report of: Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: HEALTHY PUPILS CAPITAL FUND

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This report is for information only.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Children's Services Committee about the new the Healthy Pupils Capital fund and outline the distribution model and accountability process.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Healthy Pupils Capital Fund (HPCF) is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions.

3.2 Funding is provided from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy for 2018-19 only.

3.3 Funding allocations are driven by the characteristics of local authorities' pupils and schools.

3.4 Local authorities and schools are able to pool funding or take advantage of match-funding opportunities where appropriate, but are responsible for providing assurances on how their allocation has been spent.

3.5 The local authority will be required to report on how it has spent the HPCF allocation in the same way they report on, and alongside, their other capital grants.

3.6 The HPCF and suggestions for how the grant funding should be used or allocated were discussed by the Schools Capital Sub-group at its meeting on Friday 20 April 2018 and subsequently at Schools Forum on Friday 11 May

2018. After discussions, the recommendation from the sub-group and endorsed by School Forum is that the funding should be dispersed *pro rata* (detailed below) to the relevant schools, noting the provisions in the DfE guidance document (attached as **APPENDIX A** to this report) and those summarised in paragraph 3.4 above.

Establishment Name	Healthy Pupils Capital Fund
Hart Primary School	£920.80
Golden Flatts Primary School	£1,703.08
Lynnfield Primary School	£3,685.24
Fens Primary School	£4,585.67
Kingsley Primary School	£4,789.39
St Helen's Primary School	£3,051.68
Throston Primary School	£4,536.78
Clavering Primary School	£3,756.55
Barnard Grove Primary School	£1,731.60
Rift House Primary School	£2,065.69
Rossmere Primary School	£3,514.12
Grange Primary School	£3,921.56
Greatham CE Primary School	£1,045.07
High Tunstall College of Science	£15,844.10
Springwell School	£1,503.43
Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit	£30.56
	£56,685.32

- 3.7 Single and small academy trusts and sixth-form colleges have had the opportunity to bid for HPCF through the Condition Improvement Fund in 2018-19.
- 3.8 The Department for Education (DfE) have confirmed that there are no plans for the fund to be extended to 2019/20.
- 3.9 Voluntary Aided schools will need to liaise with the relevant Diocesan authority regarding access to the HPCF through the Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP).

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

- 4.1 As noted at paragraph 3.5 above, and in the guidance at **APPENDIX A**, the local authority must formally report on the allocation and impact of the HPCF for its maintained schools. The relevant local authority officers will circulate guidance and paperwork to relevant maintained schools. This will enable the schools capital sub-group to monitor the spend and impact of the spend, and hence

provide evidence for a formal report to be returned to the DfE alongside current statutory capital returns.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If schools do not use the funding for projects detailed within the guidance the DfE could potentially claw back the funding.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 If schools do not use the funding for projects detailed within the guidance the DfE could potentially claw back the funding.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal considerations.

8. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no child and family poverty considerations.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations.

10. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no staffing considerations.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Schools Capital Sub Group minutes – 20 April 2018
Schools Forum minutes – 11 May 2018

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Department
for Education

Healthy pupils capital fund

**Guidance for responsible bodies who will
receive direct allocations**

March 2018

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Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to provide guidance on direct allocations of the healthy pupils capital fund (HPCF) to local authorities and multi-academy trusts.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for responsible bodies who will receive a direct allocation of HPCF:

- Local authorities.
- Multi-academy trusts with five or more academies and at least 3,000 pupils and academy chains who have opted in to receive a school condition allocation (SCA).
- Voluntary aided schools, who will be able to access HPCF through the Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP).
- Independent institutions (non-maintained special schools and specialist post-16 providers).

Schools, academies, headteachers and governors may also find this guidance of use.

Main points

- The HPCF is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions.
- Funding is provided from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy for 2018-19 only.
- Direct allocations for HPCF will be made to bodies responsible for individual institutions. This direct allocation is in addition to their normal SCA and will be announced and paid alongside it through the same mechanisms.
- Funding allocations for grant recipients are driven by the characteristics of their pupils and schools.
- Grant recipients are able to pool funding or take advantage of match-funding opportunities where appropriate, but are responsible for providing assurances on how their allocation has been spent.
- Responsible bodies will be required to report on how they have spent their HPCF in the same way they report on, and alongside, their SCA.

Introduction

£100m of revenue generated from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy will be provided in 2018-19 for the HPCF. This fund is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions.

The HPCF is being allocated utilising existing mechanisms for schools condition funding:

- Single and small academy trusts and sixth-form colleges have had the opportunity to bid for HPCF through the Condition Improvement Fund in 2018-19. The bidding round ran between 19 October – 14 December 2017. Further details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>
- Local authorities, large multi-academy trusts and other bodies receiving SCA will receive a direct allocation from the HPCF. This direct allocation is in addition to their normal School Condition Allocation and will be announced and paid alongside it.
- VA schools will be allocated funding on a local authority basis through the existing LCVAP mechanism.

This guidance relates only to the direct allocations to be received by responsible bodies for HPCF.

Responsible bodies eligible for direct allocations

Direct allocations for HPCF will be made to bodies responsible for individual institutions.

Local authorities are responsible and receive funding for community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools.

Voluntary aided schools are notionally assigned to their local authority. The local authority will coordinate the administration of their group funding allocation through the Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP).

Multi-academy trusts with five or more academies and at least 3,000 pupils receive a funding allocation for their academies. Where an academy chain has opted-in to receive a School Condition Allocation, they will also receive a direct allocation for HPCF.

Independent institutions (non-maintained special schools and specialist post-16 providers) will receive a direct allocation in respect of their state-funded pupils.

Funding allocations for grant recipients are driven by the characteristics of their pupils and schools.

Methodology

The HPCF will utilise the allocations methodology for the schools condition funding. Full details of the SCA methodology are available in the Condition Funding Methodology for 2018-19 explanatory note:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653264/Condition_Funding_Methodology_for_2018_19_Explanatory_note.pdf

Unlike SCA, the HPCF methodology does not include a high condition need funding component, nor any floor protection funding.

Weighted pupil numbers

Pupil numbers underpin the allocation of the HPCF. These allocations are based on pupil numbers that are weighted to reflect a number of factors. The HPCF allocation methodology uses the same base pupil numbers and the same weightings as the School Condition Allocations methodology. In summary, weightings reflect:

- **Age-phase and type of pupils** – primary, secondary, sixth form, special school and boarding pupils have different weights reflecting their relative capital costs.
- **School modernisation** – for schools where 80% of their total floor area has been replaced or refurbished in the last 10 years, each of their pupils has a 50% weighting applied to reflect that these schools will generally have lower maintenance need. All private finance initiative (PFI) schools and those being addressed in phases one and two of the Priority School Building Programme – where they meet the above modernisation criteria – will be treated as a modernised school.
- **School location** – location factors, produced by the Building Cost Information Service, are applied to pupil numbers to reflect the different capital costs faced around the country.
- **Voluntary aided schools** – VA schools are required by law to make a 10% contribution towards capital costs, so we will deduct this from their HPCF allocation. These schools also do not have access to a VAT refund scheme so we have increased their allocations to reflect this. The net impact is a VA factor that uplifts their HPCF allocation by 8%¹.

¹ Calculated as $(1 \times 90\%) \times 120\% = 108\%$ or a factor of 1.08.

Minimum allocations

If a grant recipient's allocation would be less than £500, the allocation has been increased to £500. This is to help ensure that all institutions who receive a direct allocation receive a level of funding that they can use to support the health and wellbeing of their pupils.

Publication of allocations

HPCF allocations for responsible bodies have been published on gov.uk alongside SCA allocations.

Payments schedule

Responsible bodies will receive their HPCF grant in instalments alongside their SCA allocations.

Use of the HPCF

Allocation of HPCF by responsible bodies

Responsible bodies are required to distribute their HPCF allocation to institutions for which they are responsible. The breakdown is as follows:

- Community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools – the relevant local authority will decide.
- Voluntary aided schools – the relevant local authority will be responsible for coordinating a discussion of VA partners in the area, who will agree which projects should be taken forward.
- Academies who are members of larger multi-academy trusts or opted-in chains – the MAT will make decisions on how to prioritise its funding.

Responsible bodies have the flexibility to distribute funding based on local priorities and need, but the funding must be used to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by improving and increasing availability to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions.

Responsible bodies may wish to consider the following factors when making decisions on the use of HPCF:

- What are your local priorities and needs for pupil health and wellbeing?
- What existing facilities are there?
- How will the HPCF be used to complement existing or new funding opportunities?
- How will the investment be sustainable? Responsible bodies could consider:
 - the staffing and future maintenance costs of facilities.
 - the number and characteristics of pupils who would benefit from the investment.

Responsible bodies may wish to consider the following lists of project examples. These lists are not exhaustive and intended to provide illustrative examples.

Examples of projects which could be funded using HPCF

Refurbishment or building of:

- Changing rooms
- Sports halls and gyms
- Swimming pools
- Teaching and catering kitchens
- Dining spaces, to include seating and tables
- Spaces for mental health support

Creation or renovation of:

- Garden spaces for growing produce
- Playgrounds and active play spaces, such as resurfacing, climbing walls or multi-use sports panels
- Sports pitches, hard courts and athletics tracks
- Improvements to facilities, such as floodlighting, security fencing, pitch drainage

Modification of facilities to improve accessibility for pupils with disabilities, such as:

- Hoists to allow access to swimming pools
- Adaptations to cooking facilities
- Adaptations to changing room facilities
- Wheelchair-accessible paths and planters in garden spaces
- Sports wheelchairs
- Hydrotherapy pools

Provision of equipment, such as:

- Permanent goalposts
- Outdoor table tennis tables
- Defibrillators²
- Gym equipment
- Cookers, fridges and freezers
- Bike stands

Examples of smaller scale expenditure are included below, these may be of particular relevance to recipients of smaller grant amounts.

- Water fountains
- Playground markings to facilitate active play
- Cooking equipment such as table-top hobs and food processors
- Gardening planters and equipment
- Fixed sports equipment, such as wall-mounted basketball boards

Projects which are not consistent with the intended use of the HPCF

- Operational costs, including hiring or leasing of facilities
- Viewing stands
- Car parks, roads or landscaping
- Bars, sleeping accommodation, offices or other parts of a project that have little or no health and wellbeing content

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/automated-external-defibrillators-aeds-in-schools>

- Projects (or elements of projects) where work has already been completed.
- The repayment of loans
- The purchase of land or buildings

Pooling and match-funding

HPCF will be paid directly to responsible bodies. They are able pool their allocations across a number of responsible bodies if they wish.

Organisations may offer match-funding opportunities for suitable facilities. Responsible bodies are able to combine HPCF with this type of funding.

Following the financial year-end, responsible bodies are required to provide assurances on how their allocation has been spent. The Accounting Officer will be required to complete an “Outturn Certificate”. This will confirm that the funds have been used for the purposes provided and spent in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will send the “Outturn Certificate” following the end of the financial year, pre-populated with grants made including completion instructions, for signature and return within the deadline stated in the certificate.

Accountability and reporting

HPCF for:

- local authorities is paid under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 - it is not ring-fenced or time-bound, but it is for capital expenditure only
- multi-academy trusts is subject to conditions that trusts must sign and return in order to receive payment
- non-maintained special schools, special post-16 institutions and voluntary-aided bodies is for capital expenditure

Responsible bodies will be required to report on how they have spent their HPCF in the same way they report on, and alongside, their SCA.



Department
for Education

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 June 2018



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This report is for information only.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 For Children's Services Committee to note the Annual Report of the Fostering Agency 2017/18 (**Appendix A**)

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The work of the Fostering Service is subject to National Minimum Standards applicable to the provision of Foster Care for children looked after. The National Minimum Standards, together with regulations for fostering and the placement of children looked after, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Fostering Agencies.

3.2 The annual report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff and Foster Carers, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective Foster Carers and progress in relation to the priorities set out in the Fostering Annual Report.

3.3 The Fostering Services Minimum Standard 25.7 requires Fostering Services to ensure the executive side of the Local Authority:

- Receives a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency once every 3 months;

- Monitors the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children;
 - Satisfies themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of the registration.
- 3.4 The Annual Report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff, and adopters, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, the achievements of the service during the year and the priorities for further service development in 2017/18.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific financial considerations needed for this report. However it is important to note that this is a statutory function for the council and therefore resources need providing to ensure this function is fulfilled.

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications in relation to this report.

6. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Options have been considered and there are no child and family poverty impact issues. All families and children that need support from this service are supported.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The fostering service ensures that they support all those people that want to foster and children who need to be fostered.

8. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no staff implications in relation to this report.

9. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no asset management implications in relation to this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the Fostering Agency Annual Report 2017/18.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The Fostering Service is a statutory service of the Council and as such Children's Services Committee, having the responsibility for Children's Services, require information to be able to provide scrutiny and oversight in relation to how services are delivered and their effectiveness.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Fostering National Minimum Standards Services 2011;
Fostering Regulations 2011;

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Fostering Service Annual Report 2017/18



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report of the Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering Service. Fostering children is the cornerstone of our services for children and young people looked after and the Council and our children looked after could not achieve what we do without the dedication, commitment and support of our foster carers.

In Hartlepool we have set out our overarching ambition and aspiration in our Children Looked After Strategy stating that:

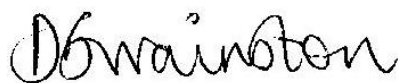
“Hartlepool Council will provide children and young people with permanence and stability to enable them to thrive, enjoy a happy and secure childhood and become confident adults who achieve their aspirations”.

We continue to strive to ensure that every looked after child in Hartlepool experiences high quality care and stable relationships, is nurtured and grows up with a sense of identity and belonging. This is our absolute priority and one which underpins all our work with children.

The stability of care placements continues to be a focus to ensure that children and young people can achieve positive outcomes. Hartlepool continues to perform well ensuring that our children have stable foster homes from which to achieve their dreams, aspirations and goals.

We have had an excellent year celebrating our foster carers at our annual awards night and also holding a successful foster carers conference.

I look forward to another successful year and would like to thank all our foster carers for the support, commitment and high quality of care they offer to our children and young people.



Danielle Swainston
Assistant Director
May 2018

Introduction

The annual report of the Fostering Service for Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2017/18. The report will reflect on the work of the team and service provided, identify changes that have taken place within the service and detail the statistical information in respect of the Fostering Service from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. Finally the report will set out priorities for service development during 2018/19.

The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 places a requirement upon Local Authority Fostering Services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive 3 monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the service. This Annual Report provides a full review of the service and interim progress reports which will be presented to Children's Services Committee on a quarterly basis throughout the financial year.

The aim of the fostering service is to recruit, train and support Foster Carers and Connected Person's to provide high quality placements for the children of Hartlepool. This is achieved through the following objectives:

The Fostering team actively works in partnership with children, young people, their families and other stakeholders involved in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people looked after by Hartlepool Borough Council in order to deliver a high quality foster care service;

The Fostering team actively seeks to involve Foster Carers, Connected Person's, children and young people looked after and the children of Foster Carers in the development and continuous improvement of the service;

The Fostering team recruit, assess, train, supervise and support a suitable and diverse range of Foster Carers and Connected Person's to provide quality care and placement choice for children and young people;

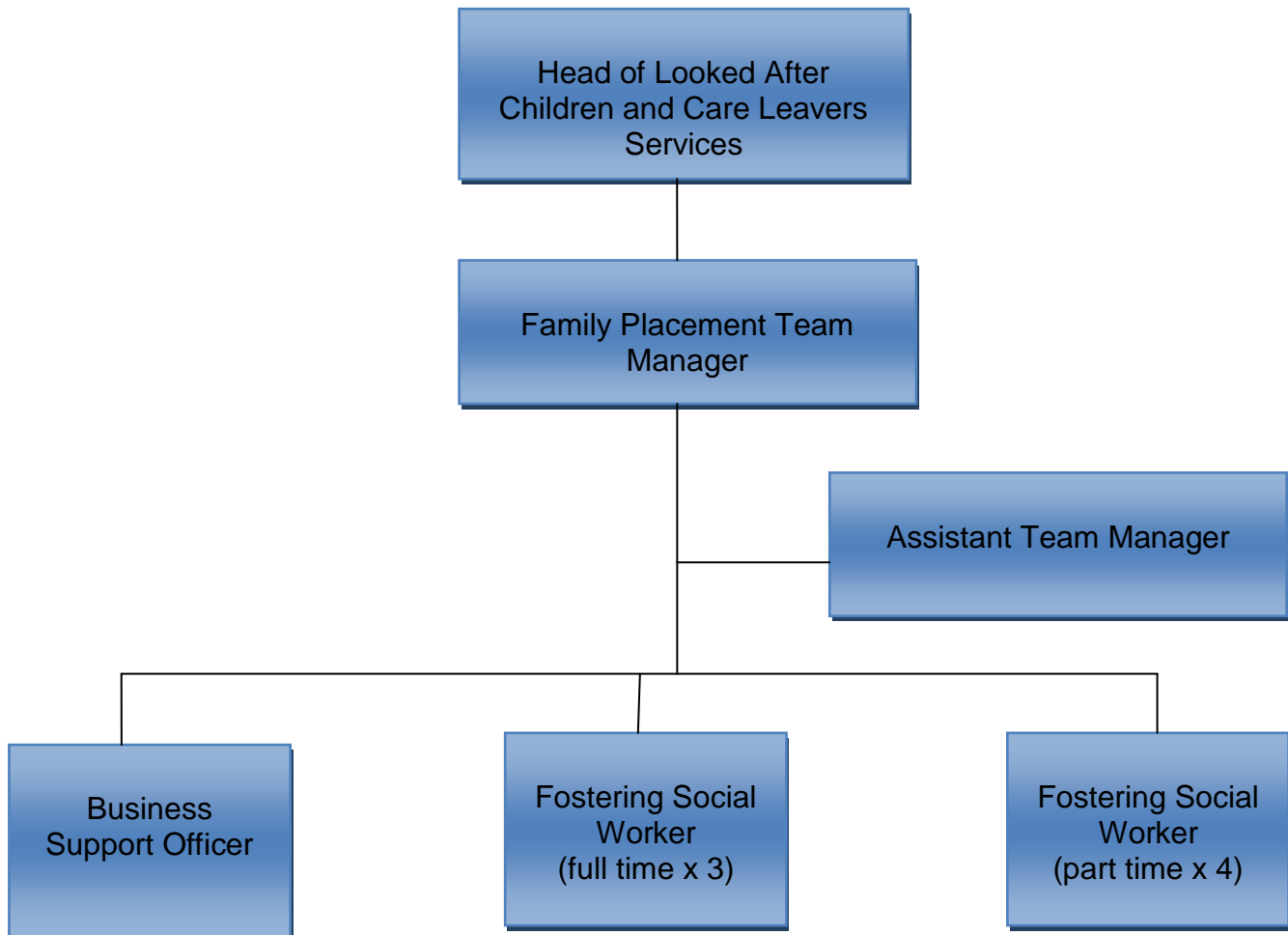
The Fostering team promotes stable placements and continuity of care for children to ensure that carers, children and young people receive appropriate support and minimum disruption leading to good outcomes;

We endeavour to ensure that wherever possible and appropriate siblings will be accommodated together;

The individual child's needs/wishes and feelings are paramount and taken into consideration in relation to placements.

Fostering Team Structure

The following table provides information relating to the current staffing structure of the Fostering Service



Governance and Oversight

OFSTED's previous approach to inspection has been a single inspection of the whole of Children's Services and this includes the Fostering Service. Hartlepool Borough Council's Children's Service was one of the first of the Local Authorities to be inspected by OFSTED using this framework and our most recent inspection under this regime took place in November/December 2013. Overall the authority was judged as good and this included the Fostering Service where specific mention was given to some exemplarily features. A further inspection is expected in early 2018.

The Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 set out the expectations in relation to the management, performance and governance of a fostering service.

The Fostering Service is required to provide quarterly reports to Children's Services Committee detailing performance in relation to fostering.

Hartlepool Borough Council has established an appropriately constituted Family Placement Panel which, in accordance with the Regulations, is chaired by an Independent Person and has established a 'central list' of persons who have the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for ratification.

This central list includes: the Independent Chair; Vice Chair; eight Agency Social Workers; an Elected Member; seven Independent Members, one of whom is a Foster Carers or adopters for other Local Authorities, have experience of working with Foster Carers or adopters and one member is a young person who was previously looked after.

The Panel also receives advice from the Local Authority Legal Advisor, Medical Advisor and Panel Advisor.

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services continues to be the Fostering Agency Decision Maker, and as such makes the final decision in relation to Foster Carer approval, Connected Person's approval, children's permanence plans and matches. The agency decision maker is robust in their quality assurance and decision making, ensuring that the best interest of children is always at the heart of everything we do.

Governance and Oversight

The Panel make recommendations on the suitability of prospective Foster Carers, long term foster care plans for children, Foster Carer reviews and the matching of children with permanent foster families. This also includes recommendations of the suitability of Connected Person's Foster Carers.

The table to the right highlights the Fostering Panel activity for 2017/2018.

Recommendation to agree a plan for long term fostering for a child looked after	19
Matches considered by the Panel	12
Number of matches involving Foster Carers from Independent Fostering Agencies.	3
Recommendations for approval of prospective Foster Carers	5
Recommendations for approval of connected person Foster Carers	18
Resignation of Foster Carers	7
The Fostering Panel considered and endorsed the recommendations of Foster Carer Reviews	15
The Fostering Panel met in the last year	23

Preparation for Placement

The Fostering Service operates a duty system for responding to placement requests and initial enquiries. Supervising Social Workers will liaise with the Social Worker to ensure that there is a thorough understanding of the child's needs so that they are able to match him/her to the most appropriate carer.

For permanent fostering placements we have a Guide to Permanence via Long Term Fostering and Adoption. This guidance clarifies the process and outlines what information is required to be presented at Panel. It is our procedure that children and young people requiring permanent placements are matched at panel prior to introductions taking place. For children and young people already in a placement and where a request is made for this placement to become permanent, the Foster Carers are considered within the family finding process. A thorough assessment of their suitability to meet the long term needs of the child/young person's is undertaken and presented to panel.

Feedback from panel;

Carer comments

"I was given time to answer and expand on questions. Warm and Welcoming, very friendly. Panel members asked questions that were relevant and not in the report

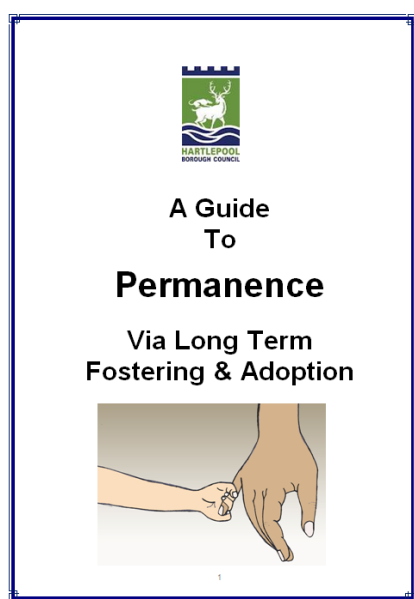
Suggestions – coffee and tea to be available. In training, a small video clip of panel taking place"

Social worker comments

"Panel was running late however this did not matter. It gave me the opportunity to chat to the couple and hopefully alleviate any anxieties. Afterwards the couple said panel was in no way as daunting as they had imagined.

The greeting and welcoming was warm and friendly and would make most feel comfortable, the panel took place on time and was set out how it was previously discussed with me. All questions were about the match of the child"

The Children in Care Council have worked extremely hard in putting together an updated Foster Carer profile, which all approved Foster Carers will complete. This will then be shared with children as part of preparation for placement. The Children and Young People's guide to Fostering to also be provided to children and young people coming into foster care.



HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

YOUR PHOTO HERE

NAME

PREVIOUS NAMES

CONTACT

PROFILE

NATIONALITY

RELIGION

EXPERIENCE

WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME A FOSTER CARER?

DO YOU THINK OR HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE THAT WOULD HELP YOU IN BEING A FOSTER CARER?

ABOUT YOU

DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEING WITH YOUR FAMILY?

LIKES/FOUNDS

LIKES

FOOD

TOYS

PLANTS

MUSIC

ANIMALS

SPORTS

COLORS

DISLIKES

HOPIES/FEARS

YOUR SPACE TO TELL US MORE

Preparation for Placement

A thorough matching process is undertaken prior to placements being made and where time allows, a placement planning meeting is held prior to the child being placed, involving Foster Carers and the child's parent/s.

In some instances it is necessary for a child to be placed at short notice to safeguard and promote their welfare. On these occasions a planning meeting is held as soon as is practically possible following the placement, with a timescale of no more than 72 hours and Delegated Authority forms being completed in order that carers can make agreed decisions surrounding the care of the child or young person placed with the consent and agreement of their parents taking the child being placed.

The team take into account the assessed needs of the child and the child and his/her family's wishes, and wherever possible maintain siblings together in the same placement.

The service benefits from a family finder role who becomes involved with children who have a plan for permanence through long term fostering at the earliest opportunity. The family finder identifies appropriate matches for the children, looking firstly at internal provision before exploring matches with the independent fostering providers. Hartlepool continues to provide good placement choice and stability with our Foster Carers, with the majority of the young people matched with Foster Carers in the period 2017/18 being matched with in-house Foster Carers.

Recruitment

The Fostering service has a recruitment strategy using a range of mediums to market the service and attract new Foster Carers. This activity takes place locally within Hartlepool and through collaboration regionally and within the Tees Valley Fostering on longer, more extensive campaigns.

Members of the Fostering team attend a quarterly regional Recruitment and Marketing Forum. The aim of Forum is to look at regional trends for recruitment and maximise resources and opportunities for collaboration.

The fostering recruitment has focused on the continuing need to recruit Foster Carers who can care for older children and sibling groups, which is both a local and regional recruitment target.

The local recruitment activity within the last 12 months has consisted of regular adverts in Hartbeat magazine and bus shelter and bill board advertising and then later will be a focus of our recruitment for 2018.

The Fostering service has continued to engage in social media and has maintained a Facebook page which is used for advertising and recruitment. This has proved to be a successful method of communication and there has been a great deal of engagement with the page, resulting in a significant increase in page 'likes' to 1072 and 11 direct new fostering enquiries.



Could you foster or adopt with Hartlepool?

We are looking for special people to give the love, happiness and joy that every child deserves. If you could become a Foster Carer or Adoptive Parent, get in touch with the Hartlepool Placement Team:

T: 01429 405588
E: fosterandadopt@hartlepool.gov.uk
W: www.hartlepool.gov.uk
Hartlepool Borough Council Child and Adult Services



Hartlepool Facebook page



Hartlepool Fostering and Adoption - HBC
Published by Jacqui Dixon (7) · 23 February · ©

Keeping brothers and sisters together in foster care is one of the biggest challenges we face in the Hartlepool Fostering Team, but one of the most important things we can do for those children. If you could foster a sibling group of 2, 3 or 4 children please get in touch, we would love to start you off on your fostering journey.
Call the team on 01429 405588 or email: fosterandadopt@hartlepool.gov.uk and we'll be in touch soon.



Bus shelter and bill board advertising

Things have changed a lot since we were teenagers...
but some things will always remain the same.

Do you have the time, patience and energy to support a teenager and prepare them for independence?
It could be more rewarding than you think.

We need short and long term Foster Carers.
If you can help... get in touch now!



Call us on 01429 405588
f [/hartlepoolfosterandadopt](https://www.facebook.com/hartlepoolfosterandadopt)



Recruitment

The Hartlepool Borough Council Website Fostering pages continue to be a positive marketing tool for fostering enquiries, the feedback received from the public is very positive regarding the information on the page. In the period 2017/18 there were **6329** visitors to the Fostering information pages.



The fostering team have continued the recruitment collaboration with the four neighbouring authorities 'Tees Valley Fostering'. This is a collaboration, sharing resources and skills to enable larger recruitment and awareness activities to take place.

The group have produced a radio advertising campaign with Global Radio. These campaigns have resulted in an increase in fostering enquiries across the Tees Valley area with 4 direct enquiries to Hartlepool Fostering Team.

April 2018 will see the launch of the Tees Valley Fostering Website, with a focus on digital recruitment. The launch will coincide with Fostering Networks Fostering Fortnight (14 – 27 May 2018)

Recruitment



The collaboration have attended Regional Summer events to promote fostering in the Tees Valley, for example, the Cleveland Show and an event in Preston Park, Stockton on Tees.



Recruitment

A significant challenge each year for the fostering team is the recruitment of new Foster Carers to offset Foster Carers at the end of their fostering career choosing to retire from fostering. In 2017/18 the fostering service accepted the resignation of 7 Foster Carers and Connected Care carers approved 5 new Foster Carers and 18 Connected Care Foster Carers.

Throughout 2017/18 there has been a significant increase in the number of children becoming looked after and the fostering service continues to strive to meet the demand for in house provision. In recent months there has been an increase in the need to source costly external placements, mainly for teenagers.

Of the 27 placements available as of the 31 March 2018, there are specific matching considerations with other children in placement, and in some cases limitations as to the carers placement approval which can prevent a placement being a suitable match for a child.

The table below details the foster care capacity as at 31 March 2018

Number of Foster Carers	127 (of which 33 are connected carers)
How many children in placement?	190 (of which 51 are placed in connected care placement) 12 Young people in Staying Put placements
How many vacancies?	27
How many not able to use/on hold?	7 carers, 10 placements on hold 17 placements not able to use due to matching

The table below details the recruitment activity for 2017/18.

Initial enquiries - where did people hear about the service?	29 Initial enquiries Where stipulated: 4 HBC Fostering website 6 Recommendation from current carers 4 Tees Valley fostering collaboration 0 Hartbeat 2 Facebook 13 Own Volition 0 Bus Shelter
Information pack sent out between 1.4.17 – 31.3.18	28 packs sent out
Initial visits How many proceeded	26 8
Preparation Group held:	Sept 2017, 4 fostering households February 2018, 4 fostering households

Foster Carer Retention

Hartlepool Borough Council recognises the invaluable contribution that Foster Carers make to The Looked After Service, and as such views Foster Carer retention as a significant priority.


Foster Carers are consulted on all aspects of the service and their views inform planning. A yearly consultation questionnaire is sent to all Foster Carers.

This year the dedication of all Hartlepool Foster Carers has again been recognised at the annual Foster Carer celebration. The event was originally planned to take place on 4 May 2018. Sadly this event was planned to take place on 23 February 2018, however, needed to be cancelled due to the adverse weather conditions.

The event took place on 4 May and was attended by over 60 Foster Carers, Social Workers, The Mayor of Hartlepool, Elected Members and the Director of Children's Joint Commissioning Services, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service. 10 Foster Carers received Special Recognition Awards after being nominated by the professionals they work with for making an exceptional contribution to the life of a child they have looked after over the last 12 months. Other awards to be presented will recognise the long service and dedication of our Foster Carers - with 11 Foster Carers receiving 10 Year Service Awards.



We aimed to utilise the timing of the event (just prior to Fostering Fortnight) as a publicity and recruitment opportunity building upon the valued contribution our Foster Carers make to the lives of Hartlepool children



We will continue to meet with our partners in Tees Valley Fostering to look at organising opportunities and events for approved Foster Carers and their families, recognising the contribution that fostering families make to the lives of the children that they foster.

These events offer fostering households the opportunity to socialise with others in the same situation as themselves.

We also recognise the important role of children whose parents foster and are working more closely with our established Sons and Daughters Group. We are increasing their role to be encouraged to participate more in recruitment activities where they have attended preparation training sharing their experiences of being in a family that fosters. They have indicated that they would be willing to meet with the children of prospective Foster Carers during the training and assessment period.

Alongside this they are planning to produce a DVD of their experiences in the event that they are unable to attend or be available for preparation training purposes.

Foster Carer Retention

The annual Fostering Christmas party was held at the Borough Hall in Hartlepool and was attended by over 150 children and their Foster Carers. Santa Claus made his annual appearance and the feedback for the event was excellent.



Fabulous party tonight!
Well done to all who organised it xx



First ever Xmas Party the kids loved it!

Lovely evening at the party
this year kids had a lovely
time the baby even tried to
steal Santa's beard.



The Fostering team also took 223 looked after children/young people and their fostering families to the pantomime to see Cinderella, which was a fabulous night and enjoyed by all.

Thanks to all involved in the organisation of the pantomime a great start to the Christmas season.

Think every adult and child loved the panto tonight. Thank you all who organised it.

All of the Council's experienced Foster Carers have completed the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care evidence workbook for Foster Carers with new Carers and Connected Person's working on the standards and being on target for completion within required timescales.

Prior to approval, all prospective carers undertake a 3 day preparation course ran by the team following the Coram BAAF Skills to Foster Programme. Approved Foster Carers and the Sons and Daughters group play an important part of this training meeting with prospective carers and at times co-delivering aspects of the training. The Preparation Training is regularly reviewed to ensure that the material remains up to date, is relevant and reflects recent research. All Foster Carers undergo a full home study assessment which also assists them in preparing to become Foster Carers and to care for other people's children.

Post approval training includes access to all courses available to the children's workforce in Hartlepool and three mandatory training days for Foster Carers. In 2017/18 the bespoke training days covered: first aid, E-safety and safeguarding.

In addition to this our Foster Carers are being encouraged to complete on-line training that is relevant to the fostering role.

On 27th June 2017 we held our second Foster Carers Conference with Richard McCann (Inspirational Speaker) taking an active role, followed by workshops covering a range of topics.

The fostering team facilitate a bi-monthly evening support group for Foster Carers, this groups consists of informal discussion and support as well as the provision of information, guest speakers and an opportunity to offer peer support. Alongside this the team facilitate a bi-monthly coffee morning which is an informal opportunity for carers to meet together. Connected Person's are invited to attend however attendance from this group of Foster Carer has been low. As a result of this we are looking to see if we can offer bespoke support groups to Connected Person's looking specifically at the issues that affect them. In addition to this we have recently met with Grandparents Plus to look at what they can offer residents locally.

Via their secure Hartlepool Borough Council email access Foster Carers have access to the updated Council Children's Services Practice Manual that provides information of policy, procedures and regulations and training and support materials.

Post Approval Support and Participation

The fostering service is part of the Specialist Services Division and is located at Church Street where the following support and participation activities are available:

All Foster Carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and receive a monthly supervision or support visit. Supervising Social Workers also make two unannounced visits a year to Foster Carers, this visit is usually undertaken by a different member of staff to the Foster Carers allocated Social Worker giving another perspective on home conditions and quality of care within the fostering household.

The Fostering team communicates regularly with carers, providing a quarterly newsletter and activities for all Foster Carers and their families to participate in.

The Fostering team hosts a private Facebook group for approved Foster Carers, to communicate with each other, share experiences, advice and knowledge with other Foster Carers. This has proven to be an excellent communication tool with Foster Carers, and 82 Foster Carers have signed up to the group.



The Placement Support Team provides individual support to carers, children and young people. This support can range from practical and emotional advice and guidance to respite support and will be identified as part of an assessment of need in partnership with the children's Social Worker and Fostering Supervising Social Worker.

The Placement Support Team facilitates the Foster Carer Sons and Daughters group, meeting on a termly basis and providing activities and advice for children and young people whose family foster.



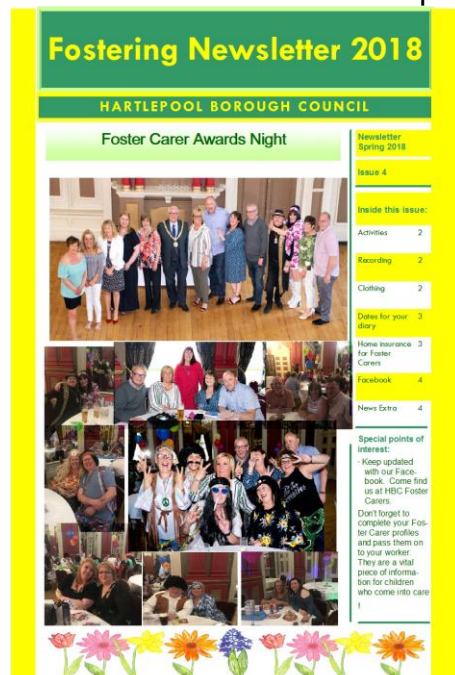
Post Approval Support and Participation

In 2018 we will have greater access to support from this team when one of the workers becomes a dedicated resource to the Family Placement Team. Their role will be to focus on providing support to workers and Foster Carers and will provide greater stability for children placed with in-house Foster Carers.

The Department commissions services for Looked After children and Foster Carers from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Carers have access to support in relation to individual young people for whom they are caring and psychologists have attended support groups to discuss general issues and challenges relating to caring for children looked after. In addition to this looked after children are entitled to a service from the LAC Therapeutic Support Team whose workers are based in the Church Street premises.

The Fostering Team has a duty worker throughout the working week who is available to respond to any calls from carers. In addition to this, Foster Carers have access to the Emergency Duty Team, the commissioned out of hours service and an out of hours telephone support service provided by Karen Douglas-Weir, Head of Business Unit (Specialist Services), Jane Young and Christopher Rooney, Head of Business Units (Safeguarding, Assessment and Support and Maureen McEnaney, (Safeguarding and Review Manager) on a rota basis. Foster Carers can contact the support phone line at any time knowing that they are communicating with someone who has knowledge of the carers and children placed.

A newsletter which is written by a Social Worker within the Fostering Team is distributed to all carers on a quarterly basis.



Post Approval Support and Participation

There is also a Celebration Evening and Summer Barbeque for children and young people who are looked after. Foster Carers are very supportive ensuring attendance and participation of children and young people.

All Foster Carers have access to the Departments recently web based Practice Manual which contains the Foster Carer handbook, Departmental Policies and Procedures and research information. The manual also provides a vehicle of communication and participation.



The view of children and young people in foster care.

'these wonderful people have changed my life forever and for the better – words aren't enough to say thank you and how much they mean to me'.

'I would have not got as many holidays if I wasn't in care'

'Help with College'

'Going on holiday with foster carers'

'Extra help with going to University, help with bursaries and application'

'I have had support to build my confidence and speak out'

'I have been helped to develop myself personally including involving me in hobbies and coming along to Children in Care Council'

'More opportunities'

'It is safer for me'

'More holidays'

'More stable relationships'

'Encourage to join in/hobbies'

Priorities for 2017-2018

- To work positively with Tees Valley Fostering to target recruitment to attract Foster Carers for older children and sibling groups and those with more challenging behaviours.
- To continue to offer and deliver an extensive training programme to our carers to ensure that all of our fostering households have achieved the Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards, Workbook for Foster Carers within the allocated timescales and can demonstrate continued professional development as Foster Carers.
- To continue with family finding post enabling children and young people to have 'permanency' in their lives as early as possible
- To look towards holding life appreciation events for all children where permanency is the option.
- To continue to demonstrate our appreciation of the commitment provided by our Foster Carers.
- To continue to strive to support our carers to engender stability within placements for our looked after children.
- To develop the role of the Placement Support Worker within the Family Placement Team.
- To consult Foster Carers in relation to the performance of the Local Authority in relation to support, training and retention of Foster Carers and to use this information to develop future priorities.
- Continue to facilitate the Sons and Daughters group for children of Foster Carers.
- To develop the role of Sons and Daughters within preparation training for prospective carers and their children.
- To further improve the quality of the care provided to children and young people to ensure better outcomes are achieved for children and young people in all aspects of their lives.
- To review the approval ages and status of the more experienced carers with a view to encouraging them to provide placements for older children with more complex needs. Ensuring that their experience matches the complexities of the children placed and allowing those less experienced carers to build upon their skills and experience.
- To continue to work within the Coram BAAF 2 stage assessment process providing timely assessments, recruitment and training.
- To continue to work collaboratively with the neighbouring authorities to share resources and expertise in Foster Carer recruitment.

The Views of Hartlepool Foster Carers

Why We Foster with Hartlepool

"We have always worked for HBC and wouldn't change. We are well supported and well informed. Training is very good and directed to those who would benefit from it. There is always someone to talk to, all members of the team are helpful and will direct us to the correct person"

"The Hartlepool Team, offer lots of support and encouragement, they are always there when you need to let off steam! We kept informed about suitable training and I love the annual conference"

"To make a difference to children in our area"

"The support we get from the team is second to none! Everyone is so helpful and even in difficult circumstances do their utmost to keep us informed. Training is offered to suit everyone and accommodate their needs. Were so pleased we chose to be part of the Hartlepool foster care team"

What Do Hartlepool Fostering Team Do Well?

"Always supported with training support and advice when needed"

"Excellent events and opportunities for us to get together with other carers"

The Views of Hartlepool Foster Carers

“Someone always there to try and help and not just during working hours either”

“Support we get both emotional and academic. The speed of placements. The ability to find forever homes, even for the most challenging of children”.

“Support, advice and easy to talk to”

“Support at weekends from your own social worker”.

“Good listeners, support and training”

“As relatively new carers I have to say the support we have received with our first placement has been fantastic! I think you all do a fabulous job . . . Keep it up”

What Could the Hartlepool Fostering Team Do Better?

“Move to a more accessible premises”

“More staff needed for support”

“More facilities for respite for children with additional needs”

“Improve communication between Foster Carers and other professionals”

“Better understanding of how emotionally attached we and our families do become its more than a job it's our life”

“These kids come into our homes as part of our family and sometimes we just need listening to”

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 June 2018



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This report is for information only.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 For Children's Services Committee to note the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2017/18 (**Appendix A**)

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The work of the Adoption Services is subject to National Minimum Standards applicable to the provision of adoption services. The National Minimum Standards together with regulations for adoption and the placement of children looked after form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of adoption agencies.

3.2 It is a requirement that the executive side of the local authority receive six monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Adoption services. This information is provided within the Annual Report, attached as **Appendix A**.

3.3 The Annual Report provides details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff, and adopters, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, the achievements of the service during the year and the priorities for further service development in 2017/18.

4. REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

- 4.1 Adoption Tees Valley went live on 1st May 2018 and delivers the adoption service for Hartlepool Borough Council, Darlington Council, Stockton-on-Tees Council, Middlesbrough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Council.
- 4.2 Performance information will be presented to committee at regular intervals on the performance of the Tees Valley Adoption Agency.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific financial considerations needed for this report. However it is important to note that this is a statutory function for the council and therefore resources need providing to ensure this function is fulfilled.

6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in relation to this report.

7. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Options have been considered and there are no child and family poverty impact issues. All families and children that need support from this service are supported.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The adoption service ensures that they support all those people that want to adopt and children who need to be adopted.

9. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no staff implications in relation to this report.

10. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no asset management implications in relation to this report.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 Children's Services Committee is asked to note the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 The Adoption Agency is a statutory service of the Council and as such Children's Services Committee, having the responsibility for Children's Services, require information to be able to provide scrutiny and oversight in relation to how services are delivered and their effectiveness.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Adoption Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011.

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Adoption Annual Report 2017/18

Together we will build better futures



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Foreword

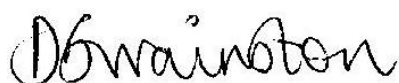
Welcome to the Adoption Services Annual Report of 2017-18. In Hartlepool we have set out our overarching ambition and aspiration in our Children Looked After Strategy stating that:

“Hartlepool Council will provide children and young people with permanence and stability to enable them to thrive, enjoy a happy and secure childhood and become confident adults who achieve their aspirations”.

The Adoption Service has a key role in contributing to this by delivering a high quality and effective Adoption Service.

The service continues to perform effectively against national and regional indicators. The service has a clear focus on continuous improvement and works hard to ensure that children, potential adopters and adopters are able to contribute to the ongoing development of the service.

The service is part of the Regional Adoption Leadership Board to ensure that best practice is understood, shared and implemented across the service. Our regional adoption agency “Tees Valley Adoption” went live on 1st May 2018 which marks an exciting time in the ongoing development of adoption services. We are working very closely with the agency to ensure that we continue to ensure that children’s stability and permanence is achieved.



Danielle Swainston
Assistant Director, Children and Families
June 2018

Introduction

The annual Adoption Agency report provides information about the activity of and outcomes achieved by the service during 2017-18 and outlines plans and strategic priorities and changes for 2018.

The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and Adoption National Minimum Standards places a requirement upon Local Authority adoption services to ensure that the Executive side of the Council receive 6 monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the agency. The Annual Report provides a full review of the service and an interim progress report is made to the Children's Services Committee at the end of the second quarter of the financial year. This will be the final adoption report completed by Hartlepool Borough Council before the transition to a regional adoption agency (Adoption Tees Valley) on 1 April 2018

Following the Government report published in March 2012 'Action Plan for Adoption - Tackling Delay', this report highlights the challenges faced when placing children for adoption. These challenges have been the catalyst for Adoption Reform which is legislated within the Children and Families Act 2014 and has brought about significant changes for adoption namely the Regionalisation of adoption agencies across the country.

The aim of the Adoption Service has been to recruit, train and support adopters to provide high quality adoptive placements for Hartlepool children with a Placement Order and a plan for adoption. This is achieved through the following objectives:

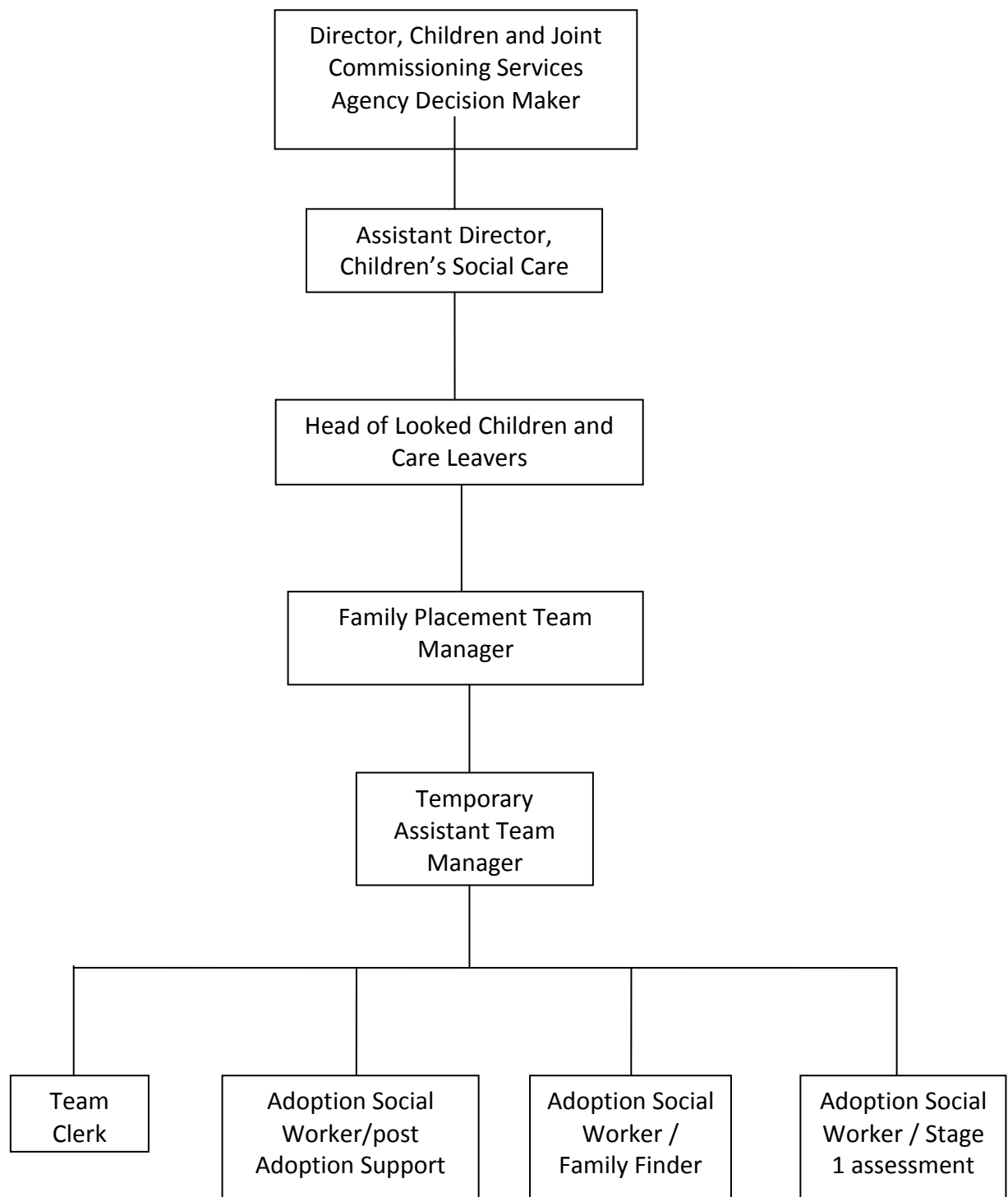
- We have ensured that where children cannot remain in the care of their birth parent/s, they have been placed with appropriate adoptive parent/s at the earliest opportunity;
- We have provided robust assessment of and support to adoptive carers and children to meet identified needs;
- We have provided advice and support to birth families;

- We have managed and facilitated the Post Box contact arrangements that support the exchange of information which has met the needs of the children, adoptive parent/s and birth parent/s;
- We have fulfilled the statutory requirements in relation to the Adoption & Children Act 2004 for the adoption of a child by a step parent;
- We have provided advice, support and guidance in relation to permanence planning and facilitated family finding for children; whose plan has been one of adoption.
- We have ensured that an Adoption Panel is supported to provide robust consideration and recommendations relating to the approval of adopters, and matching of children with their adoptive families;
- We have provided support to the Agency Decision Maker in relation to consideration and decision making regarding plans for the adoption of children.



Hartlepool Adoption Service is managed in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2004. The Adoption National Minimum Standards and the Regulations 2011 form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of adoption agencies and adoption support agencies. We are in the final stages of regionalisation with the far neighbouring local authorities namely; Darlington, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton.

Current Adoption Team Structure



Governance and Oversight of Adoption

The Adoption Service prepares an Annual Report and a six monthly progress report on its activities and performance which are presented to Children's Service Committee.

Hartlepool Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to be inspected under a new single inspection framework in November / December 2013. The overall judgement was that the local authority leads effective services that meet the requirements for Good. A separate judgement is made on the effectiveness of adoption performance and this was also judged to be Good. Many strengths of the adoption service are reflected in the inspection report and no areas for improvement were identified. We are currently awaiting our next OFSTED inspection and are expecting to retain this judgement.

The Adoption Score Cards are published annually by the Department for Education and measure the effectiveness of the local authority against key targets for adoption performance. The Hartlepool Adoption Scorecard demonstrates that the local authority is performing well and achieving government targets. Information from the Scorecards indicates that :

- For children who are placed for adoption in Hartlepool, the length of time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is shorter than the national average. (449 days in Hartlepool compared with 593 days nationally.)
- For children in Hartlepool the timescale between the local authority being granted a placement order and the local authority deciding on a match with an adoptive family is significantly lower than the national average. (204 days in Hartlepool compared with 223 days nationally).
- In Hartlepool 56% of children wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family compared to 47% nationally.

Hartlepool Borough Council's Family Placement Panel is appropriately constituted with an Independent Chair Person and a number of Panel Members with the appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the Panel for consideration.

Panel Members are fully trained and join a central list of people who can be called on to attend Panel, this includes an Independent Chair, one Vice Chair, seven Agency Social Workers, an Elected Member), five Independent Members, 1 of which is a foster carer for another authority. Panel membership also includes three members who have direct experience of adoption. Panel also benefits from a Medical Advisor and a young person who has previously been looked after and is a care leaver.

The Panel also receives advice from the local authority Legal Advisor and Panel Advisor.

The Panel currently meets fortnightly and makes recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters and the matching of children with adoptive families to the Agency Decision Maker.

The Director of Children's Services is the Adoption Agency Decision Maker and as such makes the final decision in relation to approval of prospective adopters, children's adoption plans and adoption matches. The Agency Decision Maker is robust in their quality assurance and decision making ensuring that the best interest of children is always at the heart of what we do.

Once regionalisation is fully established we would hope that some of our panel members would show and express an interest in becoming members of the adoption panel for Adoption Tees Valley, sharing the experiences they have gained and taking their knowledge they have gained whilst sitting on Hartlepool's fostering and adoption panel to the newly established agency.

Once this panel has been established Hartlepool's panel will no longer consider the approval of adopters or matches. These will be completed by Adoption Tees Valley with oversight of children's plans for Adoption by the Agency Decision Maker.

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

Number of Approved Adopters as at 31.03.18	5
Number of Adopters currently being assessed 31.03.18	3
Number of Adopters waiting to complete training 31.03.18	1
Number of Adopters with children in placement but not yet adopted	9
Number of Initial Visits undertaken 2017/18	11
Number of applications received 2017/18	10

The Adoption Service recruitment strategy has been updated on an annual basis and a range of methods have been used to attract prospective adopters to Hartlepool Borough Council Adoption Agency. We continue to have been particularly successful in achieving personal recommendations from Hartlepool's approved adopters and their families. Advertisements have been placed in the Primary Times and regional publications, alongside a particular focus this year on digital advertising through Facebook. From 1 April 2018 recruitment will become the responsibility of Adoption Tees Valley.

We are hopeful that joint resources will result in better, more effective and focussed marketing opportunities and an increase in the recruitment of prospective adopters from the extended catchment area covered by Adoption Tees Valley.

Family Finding

The Adoption Team has played a key role in finding adoptive families for children. From the point of where adoption is likely to be the permanent plan for a child, the adoption team track the planning for that child to ensure there is no delay in finding an appropriate family.

Number of children awaiting adoptive placement as of 31.03.18	5
Number of children matched and placed in an adoptive placement from 2017/18 April – March 2018	19
Number of children adopted between 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018	4
Number of adopters assessed by Hartlepool Borough Council	16 which includes : 2 second time adopters 4 foster carers approved to adopt the child that they cared for
Number of other Local Authority or VAA adopters	3
Children placed with other Local Adopters or VAA adopters	8

A key focus of the adoption reform agenda is to ensure children are placed without any delay. To facilitate this we have a family finder post whose remit is to become involved with children needing permanence via adoption at the earliest stage.

The Family Finder role has ensured the authority has been proactive in its search for the right family for a child. This search includes Hartlepool's approved adopters and has been widened to consider prospective adopters available via the Northern Consortium (where members meet regionally to share any adopters approved either by neighbouring authorities or voluntary adoption agencies), the Adoption Register, Adoption Match, or individual profiles for children sent to all adoption agencies. The Family Finder and Social Worker will, where necessary, attend adoption activity events and regional information sharing events organised by Coram Baaf in search of the right family for a child. This has proven to be most successful when family finding for sibling groups.

Hartlepool has always had a robust matching process which is undertaken in order to identify and prepare a child and prospective adopters for placement. This starts with an exchange of written and verbal information followed by a meeting between foster carer, social worker and adopters. We have continued to ensure that prospective adopters are fully involved within the process particularly prior to the match. Whilst not essential or a practice of other adoption agencies we continue to have formal Planning meet with the Agency's Medical Advisor to discuss any health related and Introductions Meetings chaired by the Team Manager. Where particular attention has been given to include and all those included in the child's life with a review of introductions at a mid way point. We have also begun to make use of chemistry visits during the family finding process which have proved successful and have given reassurances to both adopters and the child's social worker that this has been the right match.

Preparation for Placement

Children are prepared for placement in accordance with their assessed needs and depending on their age and understanding.

The service has the support of a Play Therapist and Filial Therapist based within the Specialist Services Division who provide advice and where appropriate direct support in the preparation and placement of children within the adoptive family. The potential disruption and impact on children when moving placement cannot be underestimated and it is



crucial that significant planning and support is provided at this time.

Where the Play Therapist is involved or where there is a need they are involved in the Family Finding and Planning and Introductions process for the child. Advice is sought regarding any potential issues that may arise and plans are adjusted to take into consideration any suggestions to ensure that the child has a smooth transition their adoptive placement.

Life Story work is completed by the Social Worker, this should be with a child if he or she is old enough or on behalf of the child if they are very young. The Adoption Team has completed training in Life Story Work and direct work with children for foster carers and social workers. A resource library has been established and the whole service has attended 'direct work with children' seminars where practitioners shared ideas, resources and advice was available from play therapists.

Once Adoption Tees Valley is in place each Local Authority included will have the opportunity for life story work to be completed by workers employed by the agency with specific tasks for life story and supporting adopters.

Post Adoption Support

The Adoption Team has continued to manage the 'post box system' this is an exchange of information essentially between adopters and adopted children and birth parent/extended family members. There are approximately over 150 different pieces of information exchanged and this has grown annually. The authority has an electronic system which has updated and improved the management of these arrangements. From 1 April 2018 the management of the post box system will transfer to Adoption Tees Valley. A worker from the existing team will have knowledge of the system used and the parents and children who use this service and will take this knowledge and experience to Adoption Tees Valley to ensure that there is consistency for all parties.

We continue to acknowledge that the post box system is a vital part of the statutory services provided to birth parents, adopters and adoptees; it supports the children's sense of identity, their understanding and knowledge of their birth family and can provide reassurance to both children and birth family of each other's welfare.

Local Authorities are responsible for the delivery of post adoption support to adopters and children for 3 years following the making of an Adoption Order. This support is currently provided by the Adoption Team and we have had a dedicated social worker post to this area of practice. The Adoption Team provide regular newsletters to all those who have adopted children via Hartlepool Adoption Agency. There are social events including the annual Christmas party which in 2017 was attended by over 30 children and their families. Our adopters are also invited to any regional events offered by After Adoption. Post Adoption Services and support will also transfer to the remit of Tees Valley Adoption from 1 April 2018. It is expected that the larger agency will be in a position to offer and provide a greater range of resources and that adopters in need of support will benefit from this extended service.

Following the publication of the report "Further Action on Adoption: Finding more loving homes" (DfE January 2013) and the introduction of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) 1st May 2015, requests for assessments for therapeutic support from the fund are increasing steadily with successful applications to the fund growing. In 2017/18

there were 17 applicants made to the fund of which all applications were successful and the families have received therapeutic support. This has been an area of growth for the adoption team and Post Adoption Support Worker. We will continue to oversee applications made to the ASF, however from 1 April 2018 all new applications will be made via Adoption Tees Valley.

Regional Adoption Agency/ Tees Valley Adoption

In June 2015 the DfE published the paper Regionalising Adoption setting out its proposals to move to regional adoption agencies with an aim to: speed up matching and markedly improve the life chances of neglected and damaged children; improve adopter recruitment and adoption support; and reduce costs.

Hartlepool Borough Council has for some time been considering the possibility of merging with its neighbouring authorities with whom it has pre-existing positive working relationships with. In 2014 Mott McDonald completed a feasibility study examining the possibility of the then four authorities forming a joint adoption agency.

The probability of this initiative was further considered in view of the DfE publication (see above). In 2015 a joint bid to form a regional adoption agency was made by the four interested Local Authorities (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland) they were subsequently joined by Stockton who wished to be included.

The five Local Authorities made a successful bid to the DfE for funding to develop the Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency and commissioned IMPOWER to support in the strategic development of the RAA. A second bid for interim funding was successful in April 2016 to finance the continuation of this project. A project manager was appointed and Hartlepool have successfully lead on this project on behalf of the Tees Valley Authorities. There has been a steam of work shops and events including employees from all the 5 Local Authorities covering topics including; Human Resources, ICT, Practice, Policy/Procedure, Panel and Training work streams have been identified and are currently being worked through to ensure a smooth transition.

From January 2018 the service will begin to use the Tees Valley Adoption Agency paperwork.

We are now in a position where a Service Manager has recently been appointed and workers are eager and ready to take up their employment

with Adoption Tees Valley in the proposed venue which is located centrally in Stockton.

It is expected that the project will be live from 1 May 2018. The aims of Tees Valley Adoption are to:

- Speed up matching and markedly improve the life chances of children in care.
- Improve adopter recruitment and adoption support.
- Support best practice and support reduced costs for adoptive placements.

Two full time Adoption Social Workers and one full time administration worker, from Hartlepool family placement team have joined Adoption Tees Valley on 1st May 2018.

Family finding and matching will move to Adoption Tees Valley but go back to the individual local authority for the Agency Decision Making.

The Post Box serviced will temporarily remain with each individual local authority and will be supported by workers from Adoption Tees Valley.

Achievements in the past year

2013 OFSTED's new approach to inspection is a single inspection of the whole of Children's Services and this includes the Adoption Service. Hartlepool Borough Council was one of the first of the Local Authorities to be inspected by OFSTED under this framework with the inspection taking place in November/December 2013. Overall the Authority was judged as GOOD with a sub judgement of GOOD for adoption. The inspection report highlights a number of strengths of the services and there were no recommended areas for improvement in relation to adoption. It is anticipated that the scheduled return to take place in 2018 will at least maintain if not better the judgement previously made.

The adoption team have now firmly embedded the BAAF Two Stage assessment process. One worker within the team is dedicated to monitoring recruitment activity up until the point of allocation to a worker for assessment. This sharing of tasks and responsibilities enables us ensure that assessments are completed within the required timescale.

The adoption team benefits from having a named Family Finder who attends Permanency Planning Meetings and, where there is a need, initiates the Family Finding process for those children requiring permanency via adoption. Her role allows us to family find from the earliest stages and has reduced delay in the adoption process.

Hartlepool Borough Council continues to be an active member of the Northern Consortium and have membership of the Adoption Register and Adoption Link, over the past year we have successfully matched the majority of children needing adoptive placements with in-house approved adopters.

We have successfully found adopted families for 19 children in 2017/2018.

Hartlepool Borough Council has successfully taken the lead role in project managing the transfer of the 5 neighbouring Local Authorities in the establishment of Adoption Tees Valley which went live on 1st May 2018.

Priorities for 2018



From 1 April 2018 Hartlepool's adoption services will be delivered by Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) which will be based in Stockton.

We are determined and hopeful that there will be a smooth transition of services provided to both prospective adopters, those approved and those seeking post adoption support.

We have three members of staff (two social workers and one full time admin support worker) who have remained eager and enthusiastic through this period of change and transition to Adoption Tees Valley.

We are confident that they will be in a position to take the good practices and success of Hartlepool Adoption into the agency and will offer consistency to those in assessment, those currently approved and awaiting match, and those receiving post adoption support services.

In conclusion this is a time for significant change for adoption services in Tees Valley and Hartlepool has been integrated in implementing this, taking a lead role in the project management of this new and exciting service.

We are confident that being part of a larger organisation Hartlepool children, with a plan for adoption, can only benefit from the greater resources that will be offered.

Some quotes from Hartlepool adopters;

'On first starting our adoption journey back in March 2017 we were both very excited but also nervous as we didn't know what was going to happen through the process, even though we had read up on it.

We got in touch with Hartlepool as our chosen services and we were sent a pack out. We filled this straight in and sent it back. We had a visit to our home and everything seemed to go really well and we felt at ease.

The adoption training was brilliant and we met some wonderful people who were in the same boat as us. Everything was explained greatly and we started to get really excited for the journey ahead. It was really good to meet people who had been adopted or had their child adopted as well as foster carers. this brought everything to life and made us feel ready and determined.

We were allocated our social worker and she came to visit us. She made us feel relaxed and was kind and friendly. She kept us up to date with everything that was happening and what we were to expect next.

We signed up to link maker and even though it was very hard to look at children's profiles it showed how much we wanted to adopt even more seeing so many young people with out a loving home. We showed interest in a few younger children but we were not a suitable match.

We got approved as adopters in September 2017 and it was lovely to celebrate on holiday in Spain not long later.

Our social worker got in touch with us to say another social worker had looked through our profile and like what she saw and we could be a match for a baby boy. She came to visit and the child identified for us sounded amazing. We didn't feel pressurised at any point to accept this child but we fell in love with his profile and told our social worker we wanted to go ahead.

It felt like a really long time to wait to meet our little boy but in fact didn't take to long. We did at first meet his foster carer. She is such a lovely lady and person and made us feel welcome at all times.

On the day meeting our little boy we were excited and walking into see him we got very emotional. He is a beautiful baby and so adorable. We spent a few hours with him and we knew from then on he would fit in to our family perfect. Visits were very special and we were sad to leave him behind each time. It was extremely hard Xmas day when we didn't get to see him but his foster carer sent us pictures which was nice.

The day we brought our little boy home we got back to lots of cards and it was an emotional moment as we had waited so long for this. We couldn't wait for our journey with this little guy being part of it.

We had visits from both the child's social worker and our social worker to see how things were going and each time it was a great atmosphere and every next step informed.

We are now looking forward to our little boy taking our surname.

We have thought about adopting again and most definitely would want our social worker to remain the same. She has been brilliant right the way through from the beginning. She has always been very supportive and understanding and we have enjoyed her being part of our journey in help us to get our special little boy'.

'From the first initial contact with Hartlepool we felt at ease, comfortable and confident in their service. We were always made aware of the ifs and buts, they were very efficient throughout and we didn't feel as though we were left to wait about.

Throughout the process we found the courses very useful and full of information. The assessments at home we were always made to feel comfortable. We found working with our social worker brilliant as she always kept us updated, didn't make any false promises and always got to us on time.

Throughout inductions with the boys, everything was very clear on what we were doing and when. If we needed anything at all it was no problem giving her a call. I felt our adoption journey was very positive and has been the best thing that has happened to us. The fact the process was so informative and smooth was a huge bonus'.

'We have been dealing with Hartlepool adoption agency for about 18 months and are very happy with the service we have received. From making our initial enquiry we have been very impressed with the high level of support and professionalism that has been provided to us. This support has continued throughout the whole process and is still maintained even though our child has been placed with us for over 3 months now. We have met with several members of the team and all presented themselves as very knowledgeable and very friendly. We were thrilled when we were assigned our case worker as we had met with her a few times previously and felt we had built up a good relationship with her. The adoption process is very indepth and requires that a large amount of personal information is shared with your social worker. This never felt the case with our social worker as the assessments were done in a relaxed but formal manner. It was never felt by either of us that the process was intrusive and this was down to the way our social worker guided us through the assessments. We cannot thank our social worker and the rest of the team enough for the work they have done in getting our little boy placed with us. If we were to look at going through the process again we would definitely be back in touch and wouldn't want to deal with anyone else'.