

**CABINET MEETING –8 April 2009  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I**

**Title of Report:**  
**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Author(s):**  
**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of the report is to:-

- i Provide feedback on responses to the Stage four consultation on School Place Planning for the Future held in February/March 2009.
- ii. Provide information upon the current position of the Hylton Red House, Castle View, Monkwearmouth and Hetton clusters.
- iii. Seek approval for the publication of a statutory notice in relation to Gillas Lane Primary School
- iv. Seek approval for a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the schools set out in (iv) below.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Note and consider the responses to the Stage four consultation on School Place Planning for the Future.
- ii. Note the following proposals for schools involved in the stage 4 consultation and give approval to officers to continue working upon the School Place Planning exercise, including the submission of further Cabinet reports at the appropriate time.
  - a. Hylton Red House cluster - A single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools, Hylton Red House Primary, Hylton Red House Nursery and Willow Fields Primary, to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement
  - b. Castle View cluster - Reduce PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 30 in two phases and re-model and re- align the net capacity of the school (see below). In the longer term, a single school serving the community be established, on the most appropriate site, in line with the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) programme and timescales.  
**Note - the single school would replace Bexhill Primary and Town End Primary**
  - c. Hetton cluster - A single school be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools, Hetton Primary, Hetton Nursery and Eppleton Primary, to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement
  - d. Monkwearmouth cluster - Implement the PAN reductions and as set out in iv below and remodel accommodation in line with these reductions; and across the cluster, monitor and review the surplus position annually and within the next 2– 3 years formulate proposals in light of emerging trends and PSfC.
- iii. Approve the publication of a statutory notice for the proposal to close Gillas Lane Primary school. In the event that the proposal is approved by School Organisation Committee of Cabinet, Bernard Gilpin Primary will be named as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and capacity of the receiving school.
- iv. Agree to the following reduction in PANs:  
Dame Dorothy Primary School - Reduce PAN from 30 to 25

Redby Primary School - Reduce PAN from 60 to 45  
 Seaburn Dene Primary School - Reduce PAN from 45 to 25  
 Grange Park School - Re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity with existing PAN).

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes**

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

There is a clear duty on the Council to address the impact of existing demographic changes and those projected to occur in the medium and longer term. In addressing the surplus place position there is an opportunity to improve and develop school provision where possible.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

The alternative to implementing this stage of the School Place Planning for the Future exercise is to maintain the current number of school places in these areas and to see an increase in the current number of surplus places.

**Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?**

Yes

**Relevant Review Committee:**

Children's Services

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?**

Yes

# CABINET

## REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

### SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

8 April 2009

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:-

- i Provide feedback on responses to the Stage four consultation on School Place Planning for the Future held in February/March 2009.
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- iv. Seek approval for a reduction in the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the schools set out in (iv) below.

#### 2. DESCRIPTION OF DECISION

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Note and consider the responses to the Stage four consultation on School Place Planning for the Future.
- ii. Note the following proposals for schools involved in the stage 4 consultation and give approval to officers to continue working upon the School Place Planning exercise, including the submission of further Cabinet reports at the appropriate time.
  - a. Hylton Red House cluster - A single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools, Hylton Red House Primary, Hylton Red House Nursery and Willow Fields Primary, to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.
  - b. Castle View cluster - Reduce PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 30 in two phases and re-model and re-align the net capacity of the school (see below). In the longer term, a single school serving the community be established, on the most appropriate site, in line with the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC0 programme and timescales.  
  
***Note** - the single school would replace Bexhill Primary and Town End Primary*
  - c. Hetton cluster - A single school be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools, Hetton Primary, Hetton Nursery and Eppleton Primary, to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement
  - d. Monkwearmouth cluster - Implement the PAN reductions and as set out in iv below and remodel accommodation in line with these reductions; and across the cluster, monitor and review the surplus position annually and within the next 2– 3 years formulate proposals in light of emerging trends and PSfC.

- iii. Approve the publication of a statutory notice for the proposal to close Gillas Lane Primary school. In the event that the proposal is approved by School Organisation Committee of Cabinet, Bernard Gilpin Primary will be named as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and capacity of the receiving school.
- iv. Agree to the following reduction in PANs:  
 Dame Dorothy Primary School - Reduce PAN from 30 to 25  
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 Seaburn Dene Primary School - Reduce PAN from 45 to 25  
 Grange Park School - Re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity with existing PAN).

### 3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, to promote high educational standards, to ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They should ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area, and promote diversity and increased parental choice. Local authorities also have a duty to take action when a school's surplus places are 25% or more. There is also an expectation that there should be no more than 10% surplus places across the City.
- 3.2 There has been a decline in pupil numbers over a number of years and that decline is projected to continue over the next five years and beyond. The basis of the projections is current and past admissions trends, live birth data on a ward basis and planned housing development and redevelopment. In terms of housing development, the current economic climate has impacted on the timescales and implementation of developments. However, where practicable and appropriate, potential housing developments have also been included in projections.
- 3.3 On 11 February 2009, Cabinet agreed that the following proposals be the subject of formal consultation:

#### **Hylton Red House cluster**

A single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement

***Note** - the three schools referred to are Hylton Red House Primary, Willow Fields Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery*

#### **Castle View cluster**

Reduce PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 30 in two phases and re-model and re-align the net capacity of the school. In the longer term, a single school serving the community be established, on the most appropriate site, in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales.

***Note** - the single school would replace Bexhill Primary and Town End Primary*

#### **Houghton Kepier cluster**

Close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and capacity of receiving school

#### **Hetton cluster**

A single school established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement

***Note** - The three schools referred to are Eppleton and Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery*

#### **Monkwearmouth cluster**

Implement the PAN reductions and remodel accommodation in line with these at:  
**Dame Dorothy Primary School** - Reduce PAN from 30 to 25  
**Redby Primary School** - Reduce PAN from 60 to 45  
**Seaburn Dene Primary School** - Reduce PAN from 45 to 25  
**Grange Park School** - Re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity with existing PAN

Across the cluster, monitor and review the surplus position annually and within the next 2– 3 years formulate proposals in light of emerging trends and PSfC.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 The consultation on proposals ended on 20 March 2009. The consultation included:

Meetings with staff at each school (a joint meeting of Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery was held)

Meetings with governors at each school (a joint meeting of Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery was held)

Meetings with parents/carers at each school (a joint meeting of Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery was held)

Meetings with Ward Members of affected schools

Regular updates to all Members

Regular updates to other schools

Notification of options and meetings to unions and Diocese

Notification of the proposals to the Early Years Childcare Strategic Partnership

Notification of the proposal for the Houghton Kepier cluster to the local MP

Attendance at Hetton Town Council

Collection of pupils views at Gillas Lane and Bernard Gilpin primary schools

Local press coverage

There were no meetings held with schools in the Monkwearmouth cluster.

4.2 Minutes of the public meetings, which have been circulated to schools and are available on the Council's website, are attached as Appendix 1. An analysis of responses for each school, including comments from the formal response forms and from pupils is attached as Appendix 2. Individual letters have been reproduced and included.

4.3 In addition to the consultation set out above, Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) received a report at their meeting on 12 March 2009. Members of the Hetton and Houghton communities attended the meeting and had the opportunity to address the committee. The Chairman advised members of the public that he would ensure that a copy of the minutes of the meeting outlining their concerns was submitted to Cabinet for their consideration. The minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 3. Included in the minutes are matters which the Chairman felt should be drawn to the attention of Cabinet for their consideration. These matters and the response to them are set out in paragraph 4.6 below.

4.4 A number of concerns were raised from the Hetton cluster around potential increased distance of travel for pupils. An analysis of the position in relation to their current schools and potential alternative schools/sites has been carried out. A similar exercise has also been completed for the Houghton and Hylton Red House clusters. The analysis, scattergrams showing the location of pupils and site maps are attached as Appendix 4.

4.5 A number of petitions have been received, the details of which have been included in Appendix 2. Where there is a strong resistance to the proposals there have been representations about the process of consultation and in some cases requests for responses to be addressed on an individual basis. In addition, a number of letters of complaint were received. The writers were advised that matters which are raised as complaints, but which in fact relate to the consultation process and issues arising from consultation meetings will be considered by Cabinet along with all other consultation responses set out in this report. A number of enquiries were received from Fraser Kemp MP in passing on concerns from his constituents in the Hetton and Houghton clusters; responses to these were made directly to Fraser Kemp MP. Appendix 2 includes responses

that have been received following the consultation. The specific issues raised in these responses are addressed in paragraphs 4.5.1-4.5.4 of this report.

#### 4.5.1 HYLTON RED HOUSE CLUSTER

##### **Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery**

There was generally strong support for the proposal for a single school with a recognition that the proposal would bring new facilities and benefit to pupils. There were a few negative responses but no strong opposition. The main issues raised were:

- i. The site

*If the proposal is progressed, a feasibility study of the potential sites will be undertaken and the schools and wider community will be consulted at the appropriate time*

- ii. Specific points in relation to the development of the early years provision

*The detail and development of the early years provision and facilities would be consulted upon at the time of design*

- iii. Some concerns raised about increased travel for some pupils.

*Appendix 4 sets out the position in relation to current distances travelled and distances to the proposed potential sites.*

##### **Willow Fields Primary**

There was strong support from governors and an acknowledgement that something needs to be done about surplus places and that this would be a very good solution. There was also support for moving towards establishing a federation with Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery schools. There were a few negative responses but no strong opposition. The main issues raised were:

- i. Community facilities and where they would be accessed if the school was to close

*If the proposal is progressed the issue of community facilities will be considered*

- ii. Some concerns raised about increased travel for some pupils.

*Appendix 4 sets out the position in relation to current distances travelled and distances to the proposed potential sites.*

#### 4.5.2 CASTLE VIEW CLUSTER

##### **Bexhill Primary**

Although there were very few formal responses, there was general support for the proposal in the meetings, with a recognition that a new school would bring new facilities and benefits to the area. There were no major issues raised.

##### **Town End Primary**

The single response received was very supportive of the proposal and reflected the general feedback in the meetings.

#### 4.5.3 HOUGHTON CLUSTER

##### **Bernard Gilpin Primary**

The responses received mainly express the following issues:

- i. An increase in class sizes

*If the proposal goes ahead the school would be reinstated to 2 form entry and projections show that there would be less than 60 pupils in each year group, with the exception of current Year 3.*

- ii. The capacity of the school building to accommodate additional pupils

*The school sits on a large site and the layout was built in accordance with building specification relevant at the time. The classrooms are smaller than would be built under current guidance but the internal accommodation could be remodelled to meet current specifications.*

- iii. Concerns that the current Year 3 would be disadvantaged if the proposal went ahead in 2011, when they would be Year 6, because of the size the year group would be in their SATs year.

*This point has been taken into account in formulating the proposal*

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

There is very strong opposition to the proposal from staff, governors, parents and the community. A very small minority of responses indicated support for the proposal. In addition to the very strong views expressed against closure of the school, the following specific issues, similar to those raised in the previous consultation, were raised

- i Early Years provision

*An audit of demand and capacity in the area is being undertaken. Houghton Nursery, in close proximity to Bernard Gilpin, is the main provider of 0-5 provision in the area*

- ii. Kitchen facilities

*The previous report confirmed that a kitchen would be established at Bernard Gilpin if Gillas Lane closes*

- iii. Concerns that the current Year 3 would be disadvantaged if the proposal went ahead in 2011, when they would be Year 6, because of the size the year group would be in their SATs year.

*This point has been taken into account in formulating the proposal*

- iv. An increase in class sizes

*If the proposal goes ahead the school would be reinstated to 2 form entry and projections show that there would be less than 60 pupils in each year group, with the exception of current Year 3.*

- v. The capacity of the school building to accommodate additional pupils

*The school sits on a large site and the layout was built in accordance with building specification relevant at the time. The classrooms are smaller than would be built under current guidance but the internal accommodation could be remodelled to meet current specifications.*

- vi. Increased travel for some pupils.

*Appendix 4 sets out the position in relation to current distances travelled by pupils attending Gillas Lane and the distances they would travel to Bernard Gilpin.*

#### **4.5.4 HETTON CLUSTER**

##### **Hetton Primary**

There is very strong opposition to the proposal to establish a single school from staff, governors, parents and the community. In addition to the very strong views expressed against closure of the school, the following specific issues, similar to those raised in the previous consultation, were raised:

- i. An increase in class sizes

*If the proposal goes ahead the school would be operating with classes of no more than 30*

- ii. Increased travel for some pupils.

*Appendix 4 sets out the position in relation to current distances travelled and distances to the proposed potential sites.*

- iii. Proposed sites and a request that Hetton primary be considered as a site for the new school.

*If the proposal is progressed a feasibility study will be undertaken of each potential site.*

### **Hetton Nursery**

There is very strong opposition to the proposal to establish a single school from staff, governors, parents and the community. In addition to the very strong views expressed against closure of the school, the following specific issues, similar to those raised in the previous consultation, were raised:

- i. The replacement of a nursery school, offering full childcare, with a nursery class and the loss of expertise and current facilities.

*If the proposal is implemented the new school would include a purpose built Early Years Foundation unit with suitably qualified staff. There would not be a headteacher as at present with the nursery school. It would be for the new governing body to decide on the staffing structure, including leadership of the foundation unit.*

- ii. The nursery school being brought into the process late and it has no surplus places

*Whilst the main driver for School Place Planning for the Future was to address surplus places, as the solutions have been developed some schools have been included in options, and subsequently proposals, as part of the strategic solution; this is the case with Hetton Nursery School. The establishment of a new school would complete the regeneration of primary sector schools in the Hetton area.*

- iii. There is a presumption against closure of a nursery school

*The presumption against closure applies unless the case for closure can demonstrate that:*

- a. *the LA is consistently funding numbers of empty places;*
- b. *full consideration has been given to developing the school into a Sure Start Children's Centre, and there are clear, justifiable grounds for not doing so, for example: unsuitable accommodation, poor quality provision and low demand for places;*
- c. *plans to develop alternative provision clearly demonstrate that it will be at least as equal in terms of the quantity and quality of early years provision provided by the nursery school with no loss of expertise and specialism; and that*
- d. *replacement provision is more accessible and more convenient for local parents.*

*In terms of applying the criteria the position is:*

- a. *The LA does not consistently fund surplus places across the year but the nursery is funded for 50 places from 3 year olds and the pattern is that in the*



*autumn term there are less than 50 3 year olds in nursery, for example from September to December 2009 there were 45 on roll. However, the five vacant places have been filled with younger 3 year olds since January 2009.*

- b. *The Children's Centre serving the area is based at Hetton Lyons Nursery School.*
- c. *Alternative provision would be at least equal to that which is already established at Hetton Nursery and the specialism would be transferred to the new provision.*
- d. *Access to the nursery is currently very restricted. Replacement provision would be located to offer optimum access and convenience to the community*

## **Eppleton**

There is very strong opposition to the proposal to establish a single school from staff, governors, parents and the community. In addition to the very strong views expressed against closure of the school, the following specific issues, similar to those raised in the previous consultation, were raised:

- i. An increase in class sizes

*If the proposal goes ahead the school would be operating with classes of no more than 30*

- ii. Increased travel for some pupils.

*Appendix 4 sets out the position in relation to current distances travelled and distances to the proposed potential sites.*

- iii. Proposed sites and a request that Eppleton Primary be considered as a site for the new school.

*If the proposal is progressed a feasibility study will be undertaken of each potential site.*

- iv. Potential new housing developments and the use of the 12 pupils for every 100 new homes formula

*Housing development has slowed in the current economic climate but potential redevelopments have been taken into account when projections are carried out. The formula applied is used by LAs nationally.*

- v. Responses to the consultation on options, if sent as emails or letters, were only counted, not read

*The email responses received followed the format of the response form and were therefore counted in the response forms total and were reproduced within the report in the appropriate appendix. The report stated that the points made in letters received mirrored the general tenor of the responses unless there was anything specifically different.*

## **4.6 CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE (CSRC)**

The following matters were raised by the Chairman of CSRC:

- i. a full explanation of the Hetton cluster swirl regarding the distances travelled, including an explicit depiction of the winners and losers regarding distances to be travelled should the proposal be accepted;

- ii. full clarification of the Directorate's position regarding early years provision and the replacement of nursery schools with nursery classes within primary schools, was there any national evidence to support this course of action?
- iii. the lack of clarity and confusion during the consultation process over the nursery provision being proposed for the Houghton cluster;
- iv. the need for the Local Authority to work closely within the relevant governing bodies over proposals identified;
- v. the Directorate to work closely with the Development Control Section to seek clarity over the impact of regeneration proposals and housing development on options for school place planning.

The issues are addressed below.

- i. Appendix 4 includes a breakdown of the areas pupils currently live and the schools they attend. It also shows the distances travelled by pupils currently and to the potential sites for each of the clusters, with the exception of the Castle View cluster where distance has not been raised as an issue.
- ii. There is no policy within the Directorate to close nursery schools and replace them with nursery classes. In planning school places strategically, the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been included in considerations as appropriate.
- iii. In stage 3 of the consultation the information given at Gillas Lane differed to that given at Bernard Gilpin. The position was clarified in the stage 4 consultation; Houghton Nursery School is the main provider for 0-5 in the area. An audit of capacity and demand will be undertaken.
- iv. the Local Authority will work closely with all governing bodies on the implementation of proposals. Where governors are minded to move towards establishing federations they will be fully supported by officers.
- v. The well established working relationship between Children's Services officers and officers in other relevant Directorates, who have been fully involved with the School Place Planning process, will continue to be maintained as proposals are implemented.

4.7 The surplus place position for primary schools within these clusters has been updated with the January 2009 census data and is attached as Appendix 5. Also included is a projected surplus position based on the number of places offered in reception class for September 2009 for each of the primary schools. The information is correct at the time of writing this report.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS**

5.1 The responses indicate very strong opposition to the proposals for the Hetton and Houghton clusters. However, there is nothing substantial or new that has emerged from this stage of consultation which would undermine the rationale of the options appraisals which led to the proposals. The proposals are therefore as set out in paragraph 2.

## **6 REASONS FOR DECISION**

6.1 There is a clear duty on the Council to address the impact of existing demographic changes and those projected to occur in the medium and longer term. In addressing the surplus place position there is an opportunity to improve and develop school provision where possible.

## **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 The alternative to implementing this stage of School Place Planning for the Future is to maintain the current number of school places in these areas and to see an increase in the current number of surplus places.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 Capital Costs

#### 8.1.1 New Schools

The establishment of new schools will be dependent on the timescales and funding provided in respect of the Primary Strategy for Change Programme. Any impact on public expenditure programmes over the medium to long term as a result of the current economic climate will need to be kept under review and priorities revisited as necessary. Currently the estimated cost of a new primary school is £5,750,000.

#### 8.1.2 Surplus place removal

Excluding funding for new schools, an estimated breakdown of the capital expenditure associated with the proposals is as follows:

	Removal of Surplus Places
	£
<b>SUNDERLAND NORTH</b>	
Seaburn Dene Primary	500,000
Grange Park Primary	500,000
Dame Dorothy	250,000
Redby	250,000
Hylton Castle	250,000
Castletown	100,000
<b>COALFIELD</b>	
Bernard Gilpin	750,000
East Rainton	100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,700,000</b>

- 8.1.3 The delivery of the programme will be phased over a period of years, depending upon available funding.

The proposed Capital Programme 2009/2010 – 2011/2012 contains plans to phase these works as follows:

- 2009/2010 - £500,000
- 2010/2011 - £1,750,000
- 2011/2012 - £450,000

- 8.1.4 A number of potential sources of capital funding will be used:

Modernisation Funding  
 Basic Need Funding  
 Access Initiative Funding  
 Centrally managed grant Funding  
 Schools' Devolved Formula Capital Funding

Capital receipts have not been included as a potential funding source as they are unlikely to be realised in the near future given the current economic climate.

Modernisation Funding is required to be used to support implementation of the Asset Management Plan. Where there is congruence between the Plan and the proposed developments some funding will be available from this source.

Basic need funding can be used to support school place planning.

Limited access initiative funding may be used to support developments which require adaptations or specialist equipment to improve access for those with disabilities.

There is very limited scope to use funding from small centrally managed grants if the work complies with the purposes of the grants.

Schools receive devolved capital funding which could be utilised to support implementation of proposals.

## **8.2 Revenue Costs and Savings**

8.1 In revenue terms there are a number of implications:

School Running Costs - savings will arise from fixed costs funding if the proposal to close Gillas Lane is agreed and progressed. The estimated savings arising from the proposal have been provisionally assessed at £150,000. This funding will be available for distribution to all schools through the funding formula.

Any potential savings from other proposals for new schools will be quantified as they are progressed.

Early Retirement / Redundancy Costs - The Council will work with schools and their governing bodies to maximise re-deployment opportunities wherever possible to mitigate any potential liability. The costs arising from early retirement and redundancy will depend upon the numbers of staff and the scope for re-deployment of displaced staff.

## **9. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 If Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory notice for the closure of Gillas Lane Primary School, following publication the public will have six weeks to object or make representation formally to the LA's proposal. The School Organisation Committee of Cabinet will then consider the proposal and representations received within two months of the end of the representation period.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Cabinet report 14 Feb 2007  
Cabinet Agenda 14 March 2007  
Cabinet Agenda 25 July 2007  
Cabinet briefing 8 November 2007  
Cabinet report 13 February 2008  
Cabinet report 26 June 2008  
Cabinet report 9 July 2008  
Cabinet report 8 October 2008  
Cabinet report 3 December 2008  
Cabinet report 11 February 2009

## SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

### MINUTES OF THE PARENTS STAGE OF THE CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT HYLTON RED HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HYLTON RED HOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL – 6:00 pm Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

#### Present

T Palmer D Palmer M Wooler (Acting Head teacher) D Lepine K Palmer S Houghton  
M Partridge J Nopper J Massey V Grant L Clavering C Barrow K Barrow D Sugden

#### Clerk to the Meeting

Malcolm Preston (representing Children's Services)

#### **Chairperson**

Mick McCracken (CS Head of Safeguarding)

#### Officers In attendance

Keith Moore (Deputy Director Children's Services)  
John Walvin CS Lead Officer)  
Kay Rooks (CS Support Officer Early Years)  
Sue Morgan (CS Support Officer School Improvement Service)  
Kathryn Rutherford (Communication Support Officer)  
Jess Instone (CS Support Officer – Human Resources)

#### School Place Planning For the Future

John Walvin opened the meeting by introducing Mick McCracken (MM) Head of Safeguarding in the LA who was to Chair the meeting. John Walvin welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

John reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. The Authority's target is to maintain surpluses of no more than 10% across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places in Sunderland. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

John reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary
- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary
- Bexhill Primary
- Town End Primary

John provided details on the Options for Hylton Red House/Hylton Red House Nursery/Willow Fields:-

Option 1-Re-align net capacity with existing PAN at Hylton Red House Primary -Amalgamate Southwick Primary and Willow Fields Community Primary in the new Southwick Primary increasing the PAN from 45 to 60.

Option 2--Amalgamate Willow Fields Community Primary, Hylton Red House Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery on a new site, with a PAN of 60. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 3-Close Willow Fields Community Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery and name Hylton Red House Primary as the receiving school on a new site. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 4 -Close Hylton Red House Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery and name Willow Fields Community Primary as the receiving school on a new site. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 5-Close Willow Fields Community Primary and name Southwick Primary as receiving school with an increased PAN of 60. Re-align net capacity with existing PAN at Hylton Red House Primary.

John highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

John concluded that the options analysis had shown that the responses to consultation show strongly that Willow Fields has more of an affinity with the Hylton Red House community rather than Southwick. Previous reviews have coupled Willow Fields with Southwick and there has been strong resistance from Willow Fields.

The proposal for Hylton Red House Primary/Hylton Red House Nursery/Willow Fields was a single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.

John advised upon the Primary Strategy for Change (PSFC)

- Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) - a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland
- 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas rebuilt/taken out of use and 35% improved

John advised upon the school pupil numbers from September 2008 census and the impact of proposals on surplus position.

- Hylton Red House 7
- Willow Fields 154
- **Total 161**

It was noted that the funding implications of the proposal would be to ensure that the resources, which were available to all schools, would be targeted at direct delivery of education to pupils. A new school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places. Fixed costs to be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil.

John advised that the timescale for implementation will be dependent on the Primary Strategy for Change programme and funding.

The next step would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009, and if the proposal was approved then during the summer term meetings with the three governing bodies be arranged to begin consideration of forming a soft federation/collaboration to assist and support in moving towards a new school.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

Comments and questions were invited.

Copy slides and response form were given to parents at the end of the slide presentation. Parents were advised that many additional copies of the slides and response forms were available at school and they were advised to communicate this to their friends, neighbours, and other parents and encourage many people to participate in the response process.

The Web page option for responses was highlighted to parents.

JW thanked everyone for being so attentive.

*Question* - Had any meetings been held yet between the 3 schools?"

*Answer* - There had not been any discussions as the proposal was yet to go to Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and as yet no decision has been made on the proposal. Parents were advised that the Council wanted to move forward as quickly as was possible after the cabinet's decision.

The Chair of Hylton Red House Primary School Governing Body advised parents that the 3 Chair's of governors had met one evening after a training session informally, they had not known each other prior to that meeting and had done nothing formally as yet. It was important that each school gathered its own thoughts.

Parents were advised that the City had a good track record of developing new schools e.g. locally in Southwick, and encouraged parents to go and visit the new Southwick Primary to see the building and facilities for themselves.

*Question* – In respect of children moving to the new Academy a parent asked why there is no swimming pool at the new Academy? What was the point of closing schools with pools?"

*Answer* – There was an offer to discuss this and a number of parents joined in to the discussion with other associated topics and strong views were expressed about the closure of the swimming pool at Hylton red House Comprehensive and not being replaced at the new Academy.

Parents asked that a formal answer be given to the question why was the swimming pool being lost to Hylton Red House Comprehensive School when children from the Primary school go there to learn to swim.

The Chair pointed out that this was a separate issue and had nothing to do with the reduction of places in schools.

*Question* – In relation to determining the eventual site for the new school, if numbers is to be a deciding factor do distances also come into it?

*Answer* – It was noted that a higher percentage of Willow Fields pupils currently live closer to the Academy site, there were however many factors to be taken into account when determining the eventual site for the proposed new school, e.g. planning, access etc. A thorough feasibility study of the site options would be carried out.

*Question* - Nursery School children travel as well, the academy site was thought to be further?

*Answer* - This was slightly the case.

*Question* - Was it an either or decision? What about the existing sites?

*Answer* - No, not either or. Development of either existing site would present different challenges particularly around health and safety .A thorough feasibility study of the site options would be carried out. It would be necessary to discuss this in depth with governors but nothing was being ruled in or out at this stage.

If parents had another option the LA would look at this. The proposal if approved was for a new school on a new site. It did not determine where.

Parents were encouraged to use the feedback process in highlighting any other site options.

The existing sites difficulties were discussed, particularly communities travelling to either existing site, and a site adjacent to Maplewood school.

*Question* - What will be done to this site?

*Answer* – No plans have yet been discussed in relation to the future of the existing site.

MM asked if there were any more questions.

*Question* - How long will it be before we find out?

*Answer* - We will know after the 8<sup>th</sup> April if the proposal for a new school on a new site is approved and then a timeline can be created. This information will go out to parents soon after this date. It was noted that the decision will be known on that date and the Sunderland Echo will no doubt report it, local TV also.

*Question* - How would you recruit a new Headteacher at the new school?

*Answer* – As there was an acting headteacher at the school at present and the governors were appointing a new permanent headteacher shortly. All of the paperwork and processes were ready and in place by the governing body and everything was to move forward after the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

The creation of a single new school on a single site would involve appointing one headteacher from 3.

Parents were advised that a process would be completed to appoint a new headteacher at the new school.

Parents were given details regarding Competition Laws. If 2 or more schools close and 1 new school opens competition means that the school can be run by another body e.g. parents and community groups, a faith group

Close 1 school or name the other as a receiving school then that does not apply and the LA is still in control.

It was stressed that parent's feedback around this issue was important and would be very welcome. Parents were advised by the acting Head teacher how children were very important in the area and the school will continue to give 100% best education and it was everyone's aim to drive up standards and give the best possible education.

MM encouraged all parents to respond and to communicate to others how to respond.

Parents were thanked for their attendance and participation.



## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARENTS/CARERS STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT WILLOW FIELDS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### **Present**

A. Anderson, A. Atchison, M. Atkinson, S Atkinson, D Beecraft, J Bell, J Cairns, M Charlton, S Charlton, B Cooper, K Cunningham, E Clarice, L Cromack, A. Dunn, B Dreyer, E Farish, C Fallon, J Fallon, M Gardiner, Mr M. Hartnack, C Hellens, E Holmes, T Hudson, S Howe, L Kemp, S Langley, L Lynch, V Lowdell, E Marshall, G Martin, S Matlock, C Nicholson, D Nicholson, J Parker, V Rushworth, L Robson, I Scrafton, C Stacey, K Stacey, S Straughan, E Turnbull, S Woods, V Watson, R White, G Wilson, V Wilson.

#### **Clerk for the meeting**

Ann Blakelock (Representing Children's Services)

#### **Chair of the meeting**

Cllr Celia Gofton (Chair)

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Sandra Mitchell (Head of Performance Improvement & Policy)  
Val Thompson (School Place Planning Manager)  
Sarah Usher (HR Advisor)  
Denise Willis (School Improvement Officer)  
Rachel Putz (Extended Services Manager Early Years Settings & Partnerships)  
Elaine Mills (Communications Officer)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future Presentation**

Cllr Gofton opened the meeting and introductions were made. Cllr Gofton said that notes of the meeting were being made but requested people to highlight if they wanted to ensure that a particular question or point was recorded in the minutes.

Val Thompson began the presentation.

Val reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There could be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Val reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary
- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary
- Bexhill Primary
- Town End Primary

Val provided details on the Options for Hylton Red House/Hylton Red House Nursery/Willow Fields:-

Option 1-Re-align net capacity with existing PAN at Hylton Red House Primary -Amalgamate Southwick Primary and Willow Fields Community Primary in the new Southwick Primary increasing the PAN from 45 to 60.

Option 2--Amalgamate Willow Fields Community Primary, Hylton Red House Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery on a new site, with a PAN of 60. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 3-Close Willow Fields Community Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery and name Hylton Red House Primary as the receiving school on a new site. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 4 -Close Hylton Red House Primary and Hylton Red House Nursery and name Willow Fields Community Primary as the receiving school on a new site. No change at Southwick Primary.

Option 5-Close Willow Fields Community Primary and name Southwick Primary as receiving school with an increased PAN of 60. Re-align net capacity with existing PAN at Hylton Red House Primary.

Val highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Resourced provision
- Buildings
- Previous actions
- Specialist bases
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Distance
- Class size
- Competition

Val concluded that the options analysis had shown that the responses to consultation show strongly that Willow Fields has more of an affinity with the Hylton Red House community rather than Southwick. Previous reviews have coupled Willow Fields with Southwick and there has been strong resistance from Willow Fields.

The proposal for Hylton Red House Primary/Hylton Red House Nursery/Willow Fields was a single school serving the Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.

Val advised upon the Primary Strategy for Change (PSFC)

- Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) - a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland
- 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas rebuilt/taken out of use and 35% improved

Val advised upon the school pupil numbers from September 2008 census and the impact of proposals on surplus position.

- |                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| • Hylton Red House | 7          |
| • Willow Fields    | 154        |
| • <b>Total</b>     | <b>161</b> |

It was noted that the funding implications of the proposal would be to ensure that the resources, which were available to all schools, would be targeted at direct delivery of education to pupils. A new school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places. Fixed costs to be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil.

Val advised that the timescale for implementation will be dependent on the Primary Strategy for

Change programme and funding.

The next steps would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009 and if the proposal is agreed for the three governing bodies to consider a federation. Members of the public were invited to submit their responses by Friday 20th March 2009.

Comments and questions were invited.

Question - The additional option to reduce the capacity at Hylton Red House - why was this not a viable option?

*Answer* - Government say we have to promote popular over subscribed schools. Hylton Red House is popular and oversubscribed.

*Comment* - Some resistance to plans had been put up. There was some growth currently 135 (pupils) with 20 coming into nursery against significant reductions elsewhere. We have come to terms with and are resigned to make the best of the proposal, we would get state of the art facilities but there were some concerns.

1. Believe in the school being a community facility as shown by the profile of those in the room. What would be taken out was not just a school – real issue is in what's left as a community facility.

2. Efficient way of teaching was in class size of 30 but in areas like this smaller classes are more effective. Standards had gone up over the last 4/5 years not just SATs, the CVA score competed with the rest of the City and across the country. Parents were choosing to bring their children here.

3. If move to amalgamate three schools to one it does not make sense building one primary school right next to another on the first site. Land around the academy makes sense but what about governance? At Pennywell the academy includes the primary sector. The Governing Body had discussed this and it was unlikely they would be cooperative around development of a school directly governed by the academy. If there was a threat to the Governing Body there would be issues for the Governing Body. These views needed to be taken into consideration.

*Response* - Cllr Gofton confirmed that the concern expressed was for the potential loss of the school as a community facility.

*Comment* – I run community activity two nights each week closure would take the heart out of the community. There's nothing for anyone on the estate. I have sent letters and photographs of activities previously.

*Comment* – I have two children at Willow Fields who had attended Hylton Red House, you now want to take away the facility at Willow Fields that keeps children off the street.

*Response* – We have to take out more surplus places. We would need to look at how the school is used by the community. We don't know what would happen to the school building, it may be that it could be still used and this would need to be considered.

*Response* – We don't know what would happen to the building. No promises can be made but we would look at it and also there was a Police presence to consider. The community would absolutely be considered.

*Question* – Governors run the school but who manages the community use?

*Answer* – We pay rental for hire of the hall every week.

*Comment* – The school is used for various things such as football, RAF cadets and toddlers.

*Question* – Why build two schools close together?

*Answer* – Bishop Harland is a Church school. The Government want to promote diversity. English Martyrs is Roman Catholic. Parents do choose to send their children to C of E schools. These are two different types of schools serving different needs.

*Comment* – We took our child out of English Martyrs to come to Willow Fields.

*Response* – You had that choice.

*Comment* – There would still be a choice to send to either school.

*Comment* – Staff here were fantastic from the first day of the transfer.

*Comment* – Without the staff there wouldn't be a school.

*Comment* – If two schools were in close proximity it could create rivalry.

*Response* – The children are young enough for this not to be the case. Was there a potential for rivalry?

*Comment* – (Headteacher) not that I know of.

*Comment* – It has happened in the past in Southwick. It's also a lot further to walk to travel to Rotherfield Road.

*Comment* – Witherwack is a bit out on a limb there is no pub on the estate and you are trying to take the school away. There are two old people's homes; no younger people are going to want to move here.

*Comment* – There is a need to look at facilities right across the City. It's about regeneration not running places down.

*Comment* – The new school bid, you need to think further ahead than now.

*Question* – There are two sites in Red House is there not a site in the middle?

*Answer* – The site had to be the right size these were the only two suitable for a school.

*Comment* – Hylton Red House would not have to move at all.

*Comment* – We would be very sure these were the only sites in the area.

*Question* – What's wrong with this site?

*Answer* – This will be a new start. Logistically it would be quite difficult to build a new school on the existing site while the school was still operating. We are looking at a bigger school than you have got now. The two sites identified had potential and were the most feasible.

*Question* – The name of the new school would it include Witherwack?

*Answer* – That would be the decision of the new Governing Body. Sometimes it was good to have a new name. There would be consultation and the community would be involved as would staff, children and parents. The name could be completely different.

*Question* – Could the school be on the same site as the academy?

*Answer* – If this was feasible, we are looking at a school to serve two communities.

*Response* – The site is right in Red House, the site is a big issue no one lives near the site.

*Answer* – The academy site is nearer. Information could be given on travelling distance to sites.

*Question* – Would it be very difficult to build on the school site, it's hard for parents to get a child to the site near the church. Would transport be provided?

*Answer* – There would be no provision for transport.

*Question* – Staff in school - would they be going to the new school?

*Answer* – The governing body of the school would determine the staffing structure.

*Comment* – St. Cuthbert's site (site near Bishop Harland School) was too far away I also bring another child to school.

*Comment* - Travel and safety are obviously a big part of your concerns.

*Comment* – Both locations are quite a way away, there are busy roads, children would be at risk.

*Comment* –For some children the academy site is nearer. If there are major roads we will talk to road safety to discuss the provision of crossing patrols etc. it is their responsibility to make sure children were safe crossing the road to school.

*Comment* – There are two proposed sites. The Governing Body position was that they didn't think that the Bishop Harland site was viable because of roads and transport. Governors believed that they needed a state of the art school and would like the site near the academy to give access to facilities at the academy and would be more beneficial. The school should be separate from the academy. We strongly believe the academy site would be the most viable.

*Question* – Who owns the academy land?

*Answer* – This is held in trust to the academy we would look at ways of renting back at no cost.

*Comment* – I live at Marley Potts and parents race to the current site with more than one child. We would have the new academy but still the same people. The little ones would have to go there and see what goes on – smoking, drinking.

*Response* – The whole intention of the academy was to change things, your concern is the proximity of the new academy with the primary school.

*Comment* – We see and hear things from older pupils.

*Response* – A further concern is parents having to get more than one child out to school.

*Comment* – Some have five children

*Response* – Nursery is part of the proposal. There wouldn't be a children's centre there is an established one at Bunny Hill. Potentially it would be what the Governing Body wanted to offer.

*Response* – There is also Austin House Children's Centre at Southwick.

*Comment* – School has provision for 0 years up, it's OK having Austin House and Bunny Hill but it's not the same.

*Response* – So we need to consider community, Police and playgroup.

*Comment* – After School Activities encourages them to be part of the community, taking them off the streets, Austin House and Bunny Hill are too far to go.

*Question* – What about class sizes

*Answer* – The school would open 2013 at the earliest; a single school serving the community. Current indications are 2 form entry i.e. 60 children in each year – 2 classes. The Governing Body and the Headteacher would organise – 30 max in each class.

*Question* – What about the numbers?

*Answer* – Children in both schools would transfer, some groups could be more than 60 potentially there could be temporary accommodation until bigger year groups move through the school. The temporary accommodation serves a specific purpose and is then removed.

*Question* – If applications are in excess for 1 year then its more than temporary accommodation.

*Response* – It wouldn't happen; all children in the three schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school.

*Question* – What about younger siblings?

*Answer* – Through normal admissions process siblings are high priority. Couldn't promise every child could get in.

*Question* – Would the children get to meet each other? (before the move)

*Answer* – The process starts with the federation of the governing bodies to begin links with parents, staff and children to make the changes as seamless as possible.

*Question* – It's a Cabinet decision to amalgamate or name the receiving school, had any of them been to either school? I would like to invite members into school.

*Response* – No one.

*Response* - The Leader and portfolio holder had been to other schools via an invite from the Headteacher.

*Comment* – It would be nice to see the portfolio holder at consultation meetings.

*Response* – People making the decisions could not get involved it could be looked on as compromising them.

*Response* – They (Councillors) hear what's said via notes, presentation and responses.

*Comment* – If they came and saw how people felt it would be better they should come to the meeting just to get the feeling of the meeting.

*Response* – The Leader and Portfolio holder had been involved in their own ward and understood the strength of feeling.

*Comment* - The decision makers are paid by us they should be here

*Response* – They are accountable to the public.

*Comment* – It's a foregone conclusion, you said the new school would be built, not "if" it's "when". Cabinet will only see the information on paper, can they make a decision? It's not just about money.

*Comment* –An impact assessment of the proposals on the community should be done. - the social cost and the possible impact on health & social services. There would need to be funding for consultants to carry out the work. Our concern is that initial savings could be false and the social cost could be much higher

*Question* – Is there any community involvement at Red House?

*Answer* – Hylton Red House school is not used by the community because there is a community centre.

*Comment* – The community centre doesn't allow children in.

*Comment* - The safety of the children is paramount there's always going to be lots of cars if we go to another estate. Children wouldn't always cross at the lollipop lady. Witherwack is a safe school to get to and parents can send their children on their own. In the winter we would need transport.

*Response* – In the design of a new school we have to show how traffic will be managed and ensure the safety of children.

*Comment* – This doesn't account for human error.

The Chair requested any further comments or questions.

*Response* – There would definitely be a decision on the new school. The proposal for new facilities is what we are consulting on now.

*Question* – Could funding be found from elsewhere to leave Willow Fields as it is?

*Answer* – The number of pupils drives the funding and that cannot be altered.

*Question* – When will the decision be made. When will we find out?

*Answer* – Cabinet will decide at their meeting on 8 April. If the decision is yes we will work with the governing bodies if they are agree to establish a federation. Depending on the priorities for the Primary Strategy for Change, the earliest a new school would be open would be 2013.

*Question* – When would we know which year?

*Answer* – Following this exercise and what the Cabinet decision is on all of the proposals, priorities will be decided as soon as possible. We would hope to be in a position to inform people this year.

The Chair of Governors thanked everyone for coming to support the school and reminded everyone that they needed to bear in mind that over the transition parents and community still had to support the school.

## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARENTS STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT BEXHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON MONDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2009**

#### **Present**

None

#### **Authority Officers**

Lynda Brown (Head of Standards)  
Melissa Dobrianski (HR Advice Team)  
Chris Campbell (School Improvement Officer)  
Phil Hayden (Extended Service Manager)  
Karen Spoons (Communications Officer)  
Mike Foster (Virtual Headteacher)  
Mick McCracken (Chair)

#### **Union Representative**

Richard Holmes (ATL)

Nancy Wakeham (NASUWT)

#### **Clerk for the Meeting**

Veronica McCaskill (Governor Support Team)

#### **Consultation on School Place Planning Proposed Options**

Officers waited until 6.15 p.m. at this point no parents had turned up therefore it was agreed not to proceed with the meeting. Two parents then arrived as Officers were leaving. Mike Foster agreed to give parents a brief overview of the presentation. There were no questions or comments recorded.



## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF A SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING CONSULTATION MEETING INVOLVING PARENTS OF TOWN END PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2009**

Those present were:

#### **Present**

Joseph Brown, Rose Fraser, Deborah Lovick, Jeanette Petty, Vicky Sewell, Mrs J Clennell

#### **Clerk for the meeting**

Anna Machin (Representing Children's Services)

#### **Chair for the meeting**

Cllr Wright

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Lynda Brown (Head of Standards)

Melissa Dobrianski (H R Advisor)

Cllr Wright (Councillor and Chair for the meeting)

Teresa Laybourne (Headteacher)

Joe McKeagie (School Improvement Officer)

Phil Hayden (Children's Services Extended Services)

Anna Machin (Governor Support Officer)

Karen Spoors (Communications Officer)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

Cllr Wright opened the meeting and welcomed parents. Officers were introduced to parents.

Parents were asked to specify if they wanted a particular question recorded for accuracy purposes.

Lynda reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There should be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places in Sunderland. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city. Parents were informed that some areas of the city had no problems with surplus places and other areas had huge problems. Some areas had been addressed in recent years. Surplus places in some areas was being monitored, for example in the Fulwell area which had an older population, this had resulted in less children and therefore surplus places. Lynda reported that if the Local Authority did not do anything about surplus places the Department for Families Education and Schools could take action.

Lynda reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary
- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary

- Bexhill Primary
- Town End Primary

Lynda detailed the Options for Town End Primary and Bexhill Primary:-

- Option 1-Reduce PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 45 in the short term and to 30 in the longer term with a phased re-modelling and re-alignment of the net capacity. No changes at Town End Primary
- Option 2-Amalgamate Bexhill Primary with Town End Primary in a new school building on a site to be determined, with a PAN of 60
- Option 3-Close Bexhill Primary and name Town End Primary as receiving school in new building. Increase PAN to 60
- Option 4-Close Town End Primary and name Bexhill as the receiving school in new building. Increase PAN to 60.

Parents were informed that Options 2, 3 & 4 would all result in a new school.

Lynda explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinise in detail the process for the development of proposals.

Lynda highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal and stated that these items had been considered:

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

Lynda stated that the conclusion of options analysis was;

- A single school serving the Town End Farm community would be a good long term solution and provide a new school to serve the locality. This could be achieved by options 2, 3 or 4
- The relatively new soft federation needed to be embedded before a longer term solution is implemented

Parents noted that both Town End and Bexhill Primary Schools had formed a joint committee and that Mrs Laybourne was the Executive Headteacher of both schools

Lynda advised that the proposal for Bexhill and Town End Primary Schools was to reduce the PAN at Bexhill Primary from 48 to 30 in two phases and re-model and re-align the net capacity of the school. In the longer term, a single school serving the community would be established, on the most appropriate site, in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales.

Lynda highlighted to parents the primary strategy for change (PSfC) – which was a government initiative. Parents noted that the PSfC was a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland. 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas would be rebuilt or taken out of use and 35% improved. Parents were informed that some schools within this category had already been rebuilt. Places for learning would be exciting, flexible, healthy, safe, secure and environmentally sustainable. Lynda reported that the Local Authority wanted all children in Sunderland to have this.

Lynda reported upon the school pupil numbers from the September 2008 census. Parents noted that pupil numbers would be looked at in detail in the future to see when the best time was for the new school. Lynda reported that this was a real opportunity to provide the community with a new

school. Parents noted that impact of proposals on surplus position across the cluster. The first step was to reduce the PAN at Bexhill.

It was noted that the funding implications of the proposal would be to ensure that the resources which were available to all schools would be targeted at the direct delivery of education to pupils. The new school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places and with some space for growth. Parents were informed that the new school would be built with some scope for extension in the case of unforeseen circumstances. Fixed costs would be released for even distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil.

Lynda reported that the timescale for implementation would be dependant on the Primary Strategy for Change Programme and funding. Parents noted that some schools were part of the Strategy for Change plan because they were in very old buildings, but surplus in these schools was not an issue. Parents were informed that the new school would not be completed before 2011. The timescale would be between 2012 and 2022.

The next step would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

Questions were invited.

*Comment* - Although I agree with the proposals in principle, If the new school goes out to tender, the new school would not necessarily employ the same Headteacher, and we would not wish to loose the current Headteacher.

*Response* - It was important for parents to see what the new school would be like. Two of the options would result in one closure. Only the amalgamation of the two schools would result in a new school. In this instance, according to current legislation, the Local Authority would have to ask if any organisations would like to sponsor the school, who could apply to do so. In the past this has mainly happened in secondary schools. In Sunderland these schools have remained as part of the Local Authority. If the new build option was chosen, the staff would be safeguarded and TUPE would apply. The Headteacher would not automatically remain in post.

*Comment* - We would rather have a good Headteacher than a new school.

*Response*- It would be good to have both.

*Question* - Would this still apply if options 3 or 4 were chosen?

*Answer* - Closure of one school, rather than amalgamation should not affect the Headteacher.

There were no further questions.

Cllr Wright thanked parents for attending and encouraged them to respond to the consultation.

## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARENTS/CARERS STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT BERNARD GILPIN PRIMARY SCHOOL – 6.00 pm, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009**

#### **Present**

C Alderson, Mrs Anderson, C Ashurst, K Ashurst, J Bell, J Emmerson, P Graham, S Graham, T Hall, A Hennis, Cllr R Heron, K Hind, S Hind, S Hollis, N Lawson, J Leighton, D Lindsay, B Rennison, SA Watt, Mrs Wilkinson, A Young

#### **Clerk for the Meeting**

Julie Maggiore (Representing Children's Services)

#### **Chair for the Meeting**

Cllr Errington

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Paul Campbell (Head of Resources)  
Denise Willis (School Improvement Officer)  
Kathryn Rutherford (Communications Officer)  
Rachel Putz (Extended Services Manager Early Years Settings & Partnerships)  
John Walvin (Capital Manager – Primary)  
Mandy Hoggett (HR)  
Lisa Shepherd (HR)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

The Chair explained that staff and governors had met prior to this meeting.

Paul requested those officers present to give a brief introduction.

Paul reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. The Authority's target is to maintain surpluses of no more than 10% across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places in Sunderland. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Paul reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary
- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary
- Bexhill Primary
- Town End Primary

Paul provided details on the Options for Bernard Gilpin/Gillas Lane:-

Option 1 -Close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school with an increased Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60.

Option 2 -Amalgamate Bernard Gilpin Primary and Gillas Lane Primary on the Bernard Gilpin Primary site and increase PAN to 60.

Option 3 -Reduce PAN at Bernard Gilpin Primary from 50 to 45 and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.-Reduce PAN at Gillas Lane Primary from 30 to 20 and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.

Paul explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinise in detail the process for the development of proposals.

Paul highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

Paul concluded that the options analysis had looked at the availability of places at Bernard Gilpin, the good condition of the building and the close proximity to Gillas Lane and Houghton Nursery. It also looked at the costs associated with the development of the facilities balanced against any savings in costs of realigning the net capacities at both schools and the capital and recurrent funding. Finally, ensuring that the funding was directed to the education of pupils instead of maintaining two under occupied buildings.

Paul advised that Option 3 would reduce the surplus position to 10%, which would increase if numbers continue to fall. Paul stated that this was not a long-term solution and it would not be economically sound to have two schools in such close proximity operating with significantly reduced rolls.

The Proposal for Bernard Gilpin/Gillas Lane was therefore, to close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and the capacity of the receiving school.

Paul advised upon the school pupil numbers from the September 2008 census and the impact of proposals on surplus position.

• Bernard Gilpin/Gillas Lane	140
• Burnside	35
• East Rainton	31
• <b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>

It was noted that the funding implications of the proposal would be to ensure that the resources, which were available to all schools, would be targeted at the direct delivery of education to pupils. Bernard Gilpin would receive additional funding for each transferring pupil. Fixed cost funding would be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil.

Paul advised that the earliest implementation would be September 2011.

The next step would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009 and if the proposal was approved, public notices would be issued. There would be a 6-week period for representations (objections) and a decision made within 2 months by the School Organisation Committee (SOC) of the Council.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

The Chair thanked Paul for the presentation. Comments and questions were invited.

*Question* – Will all children find a place on this site and how would you manage it?

*Answer* – There were 14 class bases at the moment. The school was designed as a 2-form entry and we will revert to a 2-form entry with this proposal. The school had been designed under different design guidance to what is used for new schools currently. The current net capacity is 350 places. This will need to be reconsidered by 2011 along with the re-modelling of classrooms. The Local Authority wants to work with the school, in this process.

*Question* – KS1 limit to the classroom is 30. What about KS2?

*Answer* – KS1 class sizes are limited to 30 pupils and this will continue through the school as year groups move through. There is no limit in KS2. However this is controlled by school PAN's (Published Admission Number's).

*Comment* – Up to now you haven't had to live near the school.

*Response* – At the moment we operate parental preference. Legally we cannot refuse if there is a space.

*Question* – Y3, what do you plan to do with this year? It is an important time for the children.

*Answer* – The proposal put forward in February 2009 is for 2011. If a decision is made both schools and the authority will work together to try and ensure a smooth transition for staff and pupils. The Headteachers' already work closely together.

*Question* – Would you introduce over the next couple of years?

*Answer* – We would work closely with the schools. One of the ways that it could be dealt with is to stop admitting to one school, but this would not create a good environment at that school for the remaining children. We are aware and need to look at how this would be managed. There is a number of ways to do it.

*Question* – Would there be a consideration for 3 classes?

*Answer* – It would be up to the Governing Body and the school to make that decision. There are Health & Safety Issues for class sizes. There is no 'cap' on class sizes in KS2. It would be an organisational consideration for the school.

*Question* – Do you have projected figures?

*Answer* – Yes. We use information from the Health Service around birth rates. There has been a small increase in births but there was a general decline and in 2004 there was a boom.

*Question* – If Gillas Lane closes would Bernard Gilpin stay the same?

*Answer* – Yes. All teachers at Bernard Gilpin would stay. The school's capacity would be increased. The situation at Gillas Lane would be different. It would be hoped that Bernard Gilpin could employ some of the staff from Gillas Lane.

*Comment* - There is an accident issue. The hall is used as a dining room; it is very busy getting the children through and is too hectic. We are concerned about the lack of space.

*Response* – We could not say at this stage what the new footprint of the building will be.

*Question* – You must have some idea?

*Answer* – I have a personal view but we are only at the consultation stage on a proposal. We have not planned anything at this stage, as this would pre-empt any decision. Ideally the Local Authority would like to work with staff, parents etc to plan and approve internal remodelling. We need time to plan effectively. Parents are key to this along with staff and governors to assist in any future design decisions.

*Question* – Would the children from Gillas Lane nursery go to Houghton Nursery?

*Answer* – Early Years officers would look at the provision in the area and look to see what the needs were in the area. If those needs could not be met elsewhere we may need to look at Bernard Gilpin.

*Comment* – At the last meeting the Local Authority had not been sure of the development figures in the area.

*Response* – Numbers have been taken into account. There is a proposal for 83 family dwellings and around 23 bungalows for old people. The formula used is that 100 new dwellings would create 12 pupils across all year groups. Families do tend to keep their children in their existing schools.

*Comment* – Y3- there could be an excess in 2011.

*Response* – The current Y3's is the year group we will have to manage carefully if this proposal is implemented in 2011.

*Comment* - Safety is a major concern.

*Response* – This is an appropriate concern but we have looked at these issues. We do have larger schools across the city.

*Question* – The car park is ridiculous. Is there a school travel plan?

*Answer* – The Headteacher is currently working on a travel plan that is 80% complete. However this would have to be amended as changes go through.

*Comment* – Parents work and need to drive and drop the children off at school.

*Response* – We have worked on the profile of parents at the moment. Knowing parents of Gillas Lane and having spoken to them not many travel by car, a lot of children walk. When planning for the transition we will talk to the Highways Department, Safer Routes to School, Police etc. Measures could be put in place and we could try and convince parents not to use their cars. This is an issue right across the City.

*Question* – When does competition come in?

*Answer* – If we had chosen option 2 this would bring in competition.

*Question* – Who decides re the Academy?

*Answer* – If this proposal goes forward there will be no competition.

*Question* – Would work be carried out during the school holidays?

*Answer* – From a building prospective six weeks is not a long time. It may be a phased programme over 2 years and we may have to decant the children whilst any building work is carried out.

*Question* – Would that be on this site?

*Answer* – Yes.

*Comment* – We don't want disruption to the children.

*Response* – We would want to make the least disruption to the children. John Walvin stated that he was involved in the building of new schools, Hetton Lyons Primary School being one of them. Children are resilient and had come out with brilliant KS2 results during that period and behaviour was not an issue there. The school had also received a good OfSTED.

*Comment* – In my experience as a teacher, children are affected, behaviour wise, by building work.

*Response*- We would take every reasonable measure possible to reduce children being affected by building work.

*Question* – What about if it doesn't work?

*Answer* – We will look to work towards an end date. My concern is if we decide to close a school we need to manage the transition very carefully so that it does not affect the children.

*Comment* – The Headteacher is already receiving calls. Year 3 is full children can't come in.

*Response*- We may have up-to 3 years to take this forward and hopefully the schools will work together with the Authority in managing a smooth transition.

*Question* – Will schools have soft federation?

*Answer* – There are no proposals to form any federation.

*Question* – Could you leave it until the current Year 3 has gone?

*Answer* - Yes. We could leave it until 2012 if there was a strong feeling for this.

*Question* – As an example to aid a smooth transition you mentioned fieldwork, bringing pupils from both schools together – would this mean extra work for the teachers?

*Answer* – the authority in consultation with both schools would develop detail of how this transition would be managed. The schools themselves will play a major part.

*Question* – What was option 3. Could you reduce numbers?

*Comment* – Short term it is the answer.

*Answer* – It has been concluded through the options appraisal that option 3 is not a long-term sustainable solution. Mixed age classes would also result.

*Response* – Need to look at how we manage it. Looking at how two schools can survive. We would prefer to see money to enhance classes. The DCFS (Department of Children, Schools and Families) are guaranteeing funds.

*Comment* – Money is ringfenced. Nothing to do with education has been frozen.

*Question* – Could Central Government put in more money like they have with banks?

*Answer* – We wish. If there is a deficit at a school the Local Authority has to take this over.

*Comment* – Pupils deal with amalgamation, bringing in new staff was disruptive.

*Response* – We would be in negotiation with the Headteacher and would look at internal systems to integrate new staff. Within the service we would look to support the Headteacher. HR support would also be available. The school knows what it needs.

*Question* – What will happen to the Gillas Lane site?

*Answer* – No decision has been made. It could be sold and the proceeds would be ringfenced for education purposes.

*Comment* - More houses would probably be built with no space in the schools for the children.

*Comment* – The building could be used as a community place. You could suggest this on the response forms.

*Comment* – It could also be used as part of the community.

*Question* – With regard to data you state there will be 12 new places for every 100 houses. Is this dependent on area of starter homes or detached houses?



*Answer* – It is not an exact science but the Local Authority does use a recognised formula and looks at previous developments for data history information. . Every Local Authority uses a similar system. The Local Authority projections have been monitored and are accurate to about 2%

*Comment* – We feel for the parents of Gillas Lane.

*Response* – It is extremely difficult for everyone as it has an effect on everyone.

*Comment* – The worry is that once it has happened if it doesn't work.

*Response* – That is why we are carefully looking at the timescale. The process is that we have to have a decision which allows us to manage the process of transition effectively.

*Comment* – Could look at the closure of Gillas Lane.

*Response* - There is not a great deal to expand upon. If it is decided to close Gillas Lane the children will probably not stay. Even though Bernard Gilpin would be named as the receiving school it doesn't mean that parents might choose to send their children to Bernard Gilpin. Parents may choose to go to Eppleton or a different primary school.

*Question* – What would happen if the Headteacher said she didn't support the decision?

*Response* – It is still consultation. All responses are taken into account. We haven't got a decision to close Gillas Lane therefore they will have their intake as normal for September 2009.

*Question* – Why not start with reception this year?

*Answer* – We have not got the decision to close Gillas Lane. Admissions are sorted in March for the next September.

*Questions* – If parents know Gillas Lane is closing they are not going to send their children there?

*Answer* – We have been in a position where a school has closed earlier as parents stopped putting their children in. This is a potential situation, which we will need to monitor closely.

*Question* – Could this happen at Gillas Lane?

*Answer* – Yes it's possible.

If the proposal is approved 130 children will come into Bernard Gilpin and we will all need to work together to bring it as one school.

*Comment* - It is very much a them and us situation in amalgamation.

*Response* – It is something that we would have to manage. Both schools would work together on integration.

*Question* – Could you recap on what happens now?

*Response* – In response the Local Authority Officer repeated the procedure that would be followed and reminded those present that response forms were available to be completed and that any issues could be stated on the forms.

*Comment* – The school could make sure response forms are available for all parents. The Local Authority is open to suggestions. The (Gillas Lane) building could be used for community use, sports facilities etc. All suggestions are what we need. We could try and attract funding.

*Question* – Has it all been decided by now?

*Answer* – No.

*Question* – How many times has a proposal been kicked back?

*Answer* – Not sure. I have only been in Sunderland for a couple of years. The Council would look into every objection that is submitted. Health & Safety also needs to be considered.

Further questions were invited. None were forthcoming.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. Those present were informed that if they had any concerns they could contact their local Councillor or the Local Authority.

## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT GILLAS LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL – 6.00 pm, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009**

#### **Present**

Janine Johnson, Anna Watson, Brian Watson (MBE), Richard Watson, Steven Johnson, Leigh Taylor-Price, Julie Milner, D.Smith, T.Allen, T.Teasdale, L.Riddell, P.Riddell, V.Boona, Lindsay Lillie, Karen Craven, Louisa Barrows, Anne Hesketh, Michaela Hasketh, Stacey Forth, Rika Molloy, Laim Malloy, Joanne Johnson, G.Graham, Chris Stafford, Debbie Stafford, Anne Stafford, Sarah Smith, Pat Nichols, Shirley Smith, Kathleen Close, Colin Dickeson, Nicola Dickeson, Janine Hodgson, Marie Fenwick, Sarah Armstrong, Deborah Bolam, Darrin Bolam, Gary Lowes, Jacqui Lowes, Janet Hutchinson, Kevin Hutchinson, Michelle Ramsbottom, Karl Wood, Richard Shrimpling, Karen Shrimpling, Stuart Anderson, P.H Chesney, Gary Chesney, David Turnball, Rita Turnball, David Middleton, Judith Middleton, Charlotte Hirst, Julie Hirst, Catherine Reid, Samantha Reid, Mandy Charlton, peter Scholey, Derrick Smith, Colin Wekefield, Colin Ayre, H. Thompson, M.Walls, A.Wood, J.Johnson, C.Johnson, Elaine Cummings, R.H Hughes, Graham Hughes, Sharon Rumley, Lyndsey Atkinson, David Coldbeck, Denise Shovlin, Terry Hambleton

NB – An attendance list was circulated and the recording of attendees is as accurate as possible but once the meeting was underway latecomers may not have been recorded.

#### **Clerk for the meeting**

Katrina Peverley (representing Children's Services)

#### **Chair of the meeting**

Cllr Diane Snowdon

#### **Officers in attendance**

Sandra Mitchell (Head of Performance Improvement & Policy)  
Val Thompson (School Place Planning Manager)  
Lynne Casey (HR Manager)  
Lyn Barnes (HR Team Leader)  
Dawn Shearsmith (School Improvement Officer)  
Kay Rooks (Early Years Advisor)  
Elaine Mills (Communications Officer)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

Cllr Snowdon said that notes of the meeting were being made but requested people to highlight if they wanted to ensure that a particular question or point was recorded in the minutes. Cllr Snowdon made introductions and detailed the order of the meeting.

Sandra Mitchell gave a brief introduction of those officers present at the meeting and began the presentation.

Sandra reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There could be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Sandra reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary

- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
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- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
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- Town End Primary

Sandra provided details on the Options for Gillas Lane/Bernard Gilpin:-

Option 1 -Close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school with an increased Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60.

Option 2 -Amalgamate Bernard Gilpin Primary and Gillas Lane Primary on the Bernard Gilpin Primary site and increase PAN to 60.

Option 3 -Reduce PAN at Bernard Gilpin Primary from 50 to 45 and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.-Reduce PAN at Gillas Lane Primary from 30 to 20 and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.

Sandra handed over to Val Thompson to complete the presentation.

Val explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinise in detail the process for the development of proposals.

Val highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

Val concluded that the options analysis had looked at the availability of places at Bernard Gilpin, the good condition of the building and the close proximity to Gillas Lane and Houghton Nursery. It also looked at the costs associated with the development of the facilities balanced against any savings in costs of realigning the net capacities at both schools and the capital and recurrent funding. Finally, ensuring that the funding was directed to the education of pupils instead of maintaining two under occupied buildings.

Val advised that Option 3 would reduce the surplus position to 10% which would increase if numbers continue to fall. Val stated that this was not a long term solution and it would not be economically sound to have two schools in such close proximity operating with significantly reduced rolls.

The Proposal for Gillas Lane/Bernard Gilpin was therefore, to close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as the receiving school, to be implemented in line with admissions and the capacity of the receiving school.

Val advised upon the school pupil numbers from the September 2008 census.

It was noted that the funding implications of the proposal would be to ensure that the resources which were available to all schools would be targeted at the direct delivery of education to pupils. Bernard Gilpin would receive additional funding for each transferring pupil. Fixed cost funding would be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil.

Val advised that the earliest implementation would be September 2011.

The next step would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009 and if the proposal was approved, public notices would be issued. There would be a 6 week period for representations (objections) and a decision made within 2 months by School Organisation Committee (SOC) of the Council.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

*Questions* were invited.

*Question* – What benefits are there for my children for this school to close?

*Answer* – It's very difficult but we need to look at the funding we have for children now and the children in the future.

*Question* – You have not answered my question, just one positive thing?

*Answer* – A sustainable school in which to finish their education, the numbers in this school are not sustainable.

*Question* – You mean to move them to another school with high noise levels, just give me one positive thing for the children?

*Answer* – We have to look at sustainability.

*Question* – Referring to the synopsis of the options on the slide, I have read the report and there are only two things from this list that were taken into account. It's an easy option to close this school, we are used as scape-goats. Our rolls are much improved, you could just close one class and leave us alone. This is a budgetary and easy implementation exercise, option 2 was too complicated for you to consider.

*Answer* – We are beyond discussing the options.

*Question* – But the decision has not yet been made?

*Answer* – We have just one proposal to consult on.

*Comment* – This is a mockery.

*Question* – I was at the cabinet meeting; they said we would have the opportunity to discuss all options at this meeting?

*Answer* – That is not the case, we are here to discuss the proposal which cabinet agreed.

*Question* – Has everyone had a copy of the report?

*Answer* – No, it is on the website and you can request copies.

*Comment* – People are entitled to know.

*Question* – What exactly are we here to discuss? This is not a debate; you are telling us what we are doing.

*Question* – I am very concerned about the current year 3 pupils who will be year 6 at the proposed closure time. As the biggest year group how will you accommodate them and what about their SATs?

*Answer* – 2011 is the *earliest* it will be implemented, it could be delayed for another year. If it's agreed that the school closes it would be hoped that the two schools would work together to ease the transition.

*Question* – How will you accommodate 76 pupils?

*Answer* – There are various ways we could do it. One example would be a temporary classroom or to re-instate teaching space at Bernard Gilpin.

*Question* – My child will be in year 6 in 2011, you are taking away my choice of places as there are no spare places at any other school so she will suffer in her SATs and be taught in a prefab.

*Answer* – That is just one option.

*Question* – You said that there is little community use of the school, there are two community points close to the school, could these be incorporated? Also, I think it is grossly unfair to the staff here to close the school instead of amalgamate.

*Answer* – Relocating community facilities was not considered as the funding is for education not the community.

*Question* – There is a large housing development nearby of 400 houses. If half were typical families with 2 children, where would the 200 children go? The facility is here.

*Answer* – We have the data, there are 83 family homes and bungalows. For every 100 houses there are expected to be 12 children.

*Comment* – We have 11 children in one street.

*Answer* – It is a nationally proven formula.

*Question* – What happens when the staff here leave for a new job? Our children suffer again.

*Answer* – That would be for governors and the Headteacher to manage.

*Comment* – You are taking away my child's school and stability.

*Answer* – It's very difficult to plan for scenarios that may or may not happen.

*Question* – Do you believe that Gillas Lane is a popular and successful school?

*Answer* – You are referring to DCSF words which actually mean full or over-subscribed.

*Question* – Why are we not supported by the LA who has this as one principle from the primary strategy for change? We know there is work to be done; we could meet the requirements of option three. You seem to go against some LA policies and strategies.

*Answer* – The purpose of this meeting is not to revisit the options. We are here to consult on the proposal that Cabinet has approved for consultation. If you want to go comment on the options you can do so in your response but the consultation is around the proposal.

*Question* – That is not what we were told. When you are asked a *question* your reply is “that is not the purpose of this meeting” or you change the definition of words, I could write a better report for option 3 to be the preferred option which is best for the community. This is not a debate.

*Comment* – Sunderland Local Authority has a list of policies that you are going against or have no evidence that you are supporting them; Community Consultation Strategy, Primary Strategy for Change, Community Cohesion, Community Empowerment Action Plan, Quality Assessment Framework, Every Child Matters, Children and Young People's Plan and the Corporate Policy, the list goes on. I can't see how you are complying with any of these policies.

*Question* – Has anyone recorded the traffic at Bernard Gilpin now, without another 130 children added?

*Answer* – We do know the traffic situation at Bernard Gilpin, we are very aware of it. It is a lot better than at some other schools.

*Question* – Then why were speed bumps installed 2 years ago?

*Question* – At the last meeting Val, you argued with Raj over the nursery unit at Bernard Gilpin, you got that wrong so what else have you got wrong?

*Answer* – I have already stated that it was not correct to say that there would definitely be a nursery at Bernard Gilpin.

*Question* – Why was Houghton Nursery not mentioned before? How could you get 2 children to school at the same time?

*Answer* – You might want to make that point in your response.

*Question* – I thought this meeting was about *answers* from you?

*Answer* – I can't make the decisions, you need to put your points in writing.

*Question* – I did that last time, you did not listen to any of it, stuff what we all think.

Headteacher – We are past the options, we are here to consult on the one proposal now.

*Comment* – You are just doing what they want you to do.

Headteacher – Lots of good questions have been raised, the Year 3 issue and the nursery is not Val's decision, we have to consider what response we can give now that will help us. Bernard Gilpin want what we want. We need a school that can provide what we can provide. Bigger classes and the effect they will have on our SEN children are good reasons to stay here plus the added effect on cost. As class sizes get bigger the increased effect on behaviour will see the need for more nurture units etc which will incur far more costs. All good responses that were put in were not taken into account. We need to look at what we put now.

*Comment* – Any organisation knows that you should anticipate a longer period of transition as the school will dip with staff leaving and the children will suffer.

*Question* – Can you explain why I am here?

*Answer* – To offer an opinion on the proposal.

*Question* – People have worked hard to put their point across, what is the point? The decision is made.

*Question* – Where are the people who decide? Have they been here and worked with the staff?

*Answer* – Cabinet make the decisions and, by invitation, they have been to other schools involved in this process.

Headteacher – We will invite them.

*Question* (Cllr Heron) – I am a governor at both schools, both Governing Bodies are on board. Both schools have worked and will continue to work together. The LA officers here today are here to discuss the proposal. The LA needs your views and alternative views. This school needs to be saved in the short term until we rebuild this estate. Houghton nursery is over subscribed. It's dangerous for parents with the traffic, please go and look. I doubt there is enough space there. We need a Sure Start centre in this side of Houghton, the Government are pushing for two year olds to go to nursery. We have got to get both right, I will put this forward, pre-school needs looked at asap.

*Question* – I would like to re-iterate the point on the nursery provision it is important.

*Answer* – I don't have the answers. One reason that the proposal states 2011 the earliest is because we recognise that nursery provision needs to be looked at therefore an audit of demand and capacity in the area will be undertaken.

*Question* – Is that not key to this?

*Question* (Cllr Heron) – Would any of the officers like to challenge what I have said?

A – No

*Comment* – This is a one-sided consultation, I don't think Cabinet care about finances. The consultation process is not over until this school is pulled down, keep fighting.

*Question* – What happens when new housing goes up? The classes are full to capacity now. The options are to use temporary classes or for the school to lose existing resources.

*Answer* – Only if implementation is 2011.

*Comment* – There is not much room in roll numbers if more children arrive.

*Question* – Are Bernard Gilpin aware that you plan to take out resources to accommodate the children?

*Answer* – This is all dependant on the date of implementation and may not be required.

*Question* – What would happen if the situation arose of an influx of children and one school was then not big enough?

*Answer* – That may or may not happen. There is space to deal with things as they happen.

*Question* – I am really disappointed. You really need to look at when you do this. It will be the time of my child's SATs in 2011 which is very important.

*Answer* – This is why we are having this consultation to hear your views on the proposal, including its possible implementation.

*Question* – I need to make a decision for my child, I cannot hang in limbo while you make a decision, there are no places in any other schools.

*Answer* – When the proposal is implemented is crucial, there is not a definite date yet.

*Comment* – I can't physically get to two schools at one time.

*Answer* – These are important points to make in your response. Cabinet have agreed to consultation on the proposal.

*Question* – You make the recommendation?

*Answer* – Yes, so we need your views on issues.

*Question* – What do I do in the meantime?

*Answer* – The report will go to cabinet in April.

*Question* – Why not wait until the current reception have left the school?

*Answer* – You might want to suggest that in your response.

*Question* – I don't believe that there are only 12 children expected for 100 houses. Why can't we wait until the development is finished?

*Answer* – It is a nationally recognised formula, if you doubt the validity you need to record that in your response form.

*Question* – There are no schools in our area, why not wait?

*Answer* – We have waited, we were here a few years ago. The projections are suggesting that the houses would not have a significant impact on numbers.

*Question* – If it does?



*Answer* – We will address it then.

*Question* – I can't believe that members of Cabinet have not visited the school. If you are planning school places, should you be waiting until 2011? You don't know what will happen then.

*Answer* – The proposal is to close Gillas Lane.

*Headteacher* – It is crucial for us to stall the process, there are tight timescales and important issues to consider like the nursery which was not an issue before and this could have impeded that consultation.

*Question* – My view is to keep the school open. I have three children, where will they go to nursery? Parents don't go by statistics. What extra provision will be made at Bernard Gilpin?

*Answer* – If the proposal went ahead, I am sure that the Headteacher at Bernard Gilpin would be happy to work with parents. The kitchen would be resolved. I know the nursery is a major issue which we will look at quickly.

*Question* – Will any space increase be permanent at Bernard Gilpin?

*Answer* – Yes, it will be taken back to a 2 form entry.

*Comment* – My child will be lost in a school of 422 children.

*Dawn Shearsmith* – I can dispute that, as an ex-Headteacher of a large school, I knew every one of my children.

*Question* – I am puzzled, this meeting is a repeat of the previous one. I have taught in big schools, you don't know the children like they do here. I taught at old Houghton school in prefabs which were there for years and there were busy roads. Bernard Gilpin staff will do what they can but they have no kitchen or nursery. My daughter-in-law is a midwife and there has been a large influx of babies born, what will you do with them?

*Answer* – We work with the relevant departments and know the live birth predictions.

*Question* – Not in the North East.

*Answer* – Yes, local information by ward.

*Question* – Your 2011 numbers are wrong then.

*Comment* – You know the answers you are just not acting on them.

*Comment* – Early years needs to be looked at again.

*Answer* – Agreed.

*Question* – When?

*Answer* – We will carry out an audit as quickly as possible.

*Question* – Would you move children in the middle of the academic year if the school closed?

*Answer* – No, it would always be a September start.

*Question* – It's not viable to do this in 2011, there are legal papers etc to deal with.

*Answer* – Once the decision has been made by the School Organisation Committee (SOC) there is no time limit on when it has to be done, that's why the responses are important.

*Question* – How can Cabinet change their mind on a decision when there is only one option?

*Question* – What information do Cabinet get?

*Answer* – The report to Cabinet included appendices with the responses and minutes of the meetings held in October.

*Question* – In reality Cabinet have not had all three options. Have they had a presentation? It's you we have to convince, so we are all wasting our time.

*Answer* – Your comments seem to be derogatory about Cabinet. Cabinet are elected Members who have had a presentation and all of the information they need to inform their decision.

Cllr Heron – It would taint the process for Cabinet to be at this meeting, we do have the opportunity to question officers and we do.

*Comment* – I don't see how they are getting a balance to the argument.

Cllr Snowdon – We get sight of all these documents and there are challenges made.

*Comment* – Unless you are at this meeting, you are not getting a balance.

*Question* – Can I confirm that we have made an invitation to Cabinet members to talk to us as this meeting is redundant?

*Answer* – You will need to invite them through the formal route via the Headteacher.

Headteacher – We will invite them.

*Question* – I read the report. Gillas Lane are being unfairly treated compared to other areas. Grange Park are now being re-modelled? It's very unfair and there are inconsistencies in the report.

*Answer* – Grange Park's proposal come's with a strong caveat of a review in the next couple of years.

*Question* – Why can't we do that here?

*Question* – You make the decision now when the houses have been demolished, not when they have been rebuilt.

*Answer* – There has been a lot of debate about the North, the number of schools with surplus places in that area requires a measured approach to produce long term solutions.

*Question* – We can meet those requirements, this is a viable school but not recognised as it is in a cluster.

*Answer* – We have looked at clusters.

*Question* – Yes and not individual schools, so you are therefore suggesting that a viable and popular school close.

*Answer* – It depends what you mean by viable.

*Question* – I mean what was said at that last meeting, that this school is viable.

*Question* – We are two schools in close proximity. We offer after school clubs etc, would Bernard Gilpin be able to accommodate that?

*Question* – Where's my parental choice and the provision for people who do not drive?

*Answer* – The distance is not unreasonable. From the children on this estate, at least the same number already go to Bernard Gilpin, so it is viable.

*Question* – You have no other option if you do not want your child to go there. That's not what I want?

*Answer* – Your comment has been noted.

*Question* – You keep saying that comments are minuted, how do you know which parent said what for a reply?

*Answer* – We can reply to response forms.

*Question* – The response were not acknowledged last time?

*Answer* – That is a concern, I believed that they were. We will acknowledge all responses.

Sandra Mitchell – Those who would like a response need to put an address on the response form.

*Question* – There are errors on the option appraisal that Cabinet need to be aware of. We did not supply Bernard Gilpin with meals, also option two was wrong.

*Answer* – it was incorrect in the report but Cabinet know.

*Question* – How can we have credibility in the report?

Cllr Snowdon – I can confirm that is was raised at a meeting.

*Question* – All responses will be considered?

*Answer* – Yes

*Question* – So they will be included in your response back?

*Answer* – The response will be included in the report to Cabinet.

*Question* – Can they be sent to parents who give their address as some parents have valid reasons for not being here tonight?

*Answer* – It is a public document and will be on the website.

*Question* – Your presumption that everyone has internet access is not socially inclusive.

Headteacher – I know you feel disheartened and I acknowledge all of your hard work with the petition on the website and the coffee morning on Thursday. Keep fighting. We will invite Cabinet to our school, thanks for all your hard work.

Cllr Snowdon drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for their participation and attendance.

## SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

### MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT HETTON PRIMARY SCHOOL - THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2009

Present

L Barrass, C Bradbury, H Brown (NUT), A M Burns, S Bonsall, C Camsell, L Charlton, C College, D Craggs, R Craggs, J Dixon, J Fraud, L Hall, N Headen, C Harrison, H L Hepworth, D Hudson, W Hind, B Guidarelli, O Jenner, B Lambton, C Lambton, D Power, A Reay, J Richardson, L Rushworth, F Terry, L Turnbull, R Webster, E Vernon, J Wilson, T Wright

Others (not recorded)

#### **Clerk for the meeting**

Linda Jobson (Representing Children's Services)

#### **Chair for Meeting**

Cllr Graeme Miller (Washington South)

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Beverley Scanlon (BSF Project Director - Build)

John Walvin (Capital Manager (Primary))

Phil Haydon (Extended Services)

Sarah Usher (HR Advisor)

Kathryn Rutherford (Communications Officer)

Sue Morgan (School Improvement Partner)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

Prior to the commence of the presentation parents stated the following:-

'HANDS OFF HETTON PRIMARY'

We are Hetton Primary Parents and Carers United. I am a parent of a child at this wonderful school. We are speaking as representatives of the parents, carers, pupils, staff and teachers of this school.

We are infuriated and disgusted and we are deeply opposed to the closure of our lovely school. As a proposal it lacks important details and these have not been sufficiently addressed by yourselves.

Our views and opinions so far have not been taken seriously and they have not been taken into consideration during your decision making process.

We have reviewed the report sent to Cabinet. The decision to close our school is based on finance!

To you our children are a drain on your finances. To us they are precious gifts. As parents we will always do the very best for them and that is why we decided to send them to Hetton Primary School.

At this wonderful community school our children get the best educational provision for their individual needs.

Can we win this?

Yes we can

Can we stop you?

Yes we can

Can we save our school?

Yes we will!

The Chair thanked the parents/carers for their attendance and the spirit in which they presented themselves and their support.

Cllr Miller reported that he was a Councillor in Washington and had no conflict of interest in the review of surplus places. The Chair reminded those present that it was an opportunity to put forward their views and comments.

Beverley Scanlon gave a brief introduction of those officers present at the meeting and gave her presentation.

Beverley reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There could be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Beverley reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options and noted the school involved.

The options for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Le Hole Nursery were noted as presented.

Beverley explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinize in detail the process for the development of proposals.

John highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

Beverley concluded the main outcomes of the options analysis:

A new school to replace Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Le Hole Nursery would complete the regeneration of schools in the Hetton/Eppleton area;

and

If Hetton Le Hole Nursery closed and early years provision was established at Eppleton and Hetton Primary the costs associated with the development of the facilities, coupled with the additional recurrent costs, would not make this an economical option

The proposal for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Nursery was therefore, to establish a single school in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term Governing Bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement

Beverley reported that the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) was a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland. 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas rebuilt/taken out of use and 35% improved

The Pupil numbers from September 2008 census were noted. The impact of proposals on surplus position would be a total of 140 places from Eppleton/Hetton removed.

Beverley reported that the resources available to all schools will be targeted at direct delivery of education to pupils. New school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places. Fixed costs to be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil

John Walvin tabled the potential sites.

- Community Association (end of Summerson Street)
- Former Public Works Depot (behind Finnegan's pub)
- Area adjacent to the Springboard/Dairy ()

Questions were invited.

*Question* - Have the sites been visited?

*Answer* – Yes. These are the identified site options if the proposal is adopted. Each site had its advantages and challenges. They all would need to have a feasibility study undertaken and the outcome will be shared with the governing bodies.

The next step would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009 and if the proposal was approved, the Federation would be established to develop the new school proposal further with the Local Authority. Once the proposal was firm, this would need to be agreed by Cabinet in order that public notices could be issued. There would be a 6 week period for representations (objections) and a decision made within 2 months by the School Organisation Committee (SOC) of the Council's Cabinet.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

*Question* – I have brought my children here for over a period of 19 years. What are you going to do about the staff as they work hard? Children know and love the staff. I would not want my children to go to a school where they would not know the staff.

*Answer* – That is why we want to plan early as we do not want uncertainty or want staff to leave. In terms of the proposals we are amalgamating all three schools or closing one and naming a receiving school. There will be as many pupils in the new school, therefore the current staff would be required. The Governing Body would propose a staffing structure.

*Question* – Are you saying all staff will go to the new school? If not the children will not go. Is there any guarantee?

*Answer* – We accept the comment. The Children's Services Human Resources Team have an interest to retain experienced staff but we are unable to guarantee all staff a post. There is a laid down process that would need to be followed. All staff would have access to the posts available. If three schools closed the new Governing Body will set the staffing structure and all staff would have equal access. If one school closed and another was named as the receiving school there will be more uncertainty.

*Question* – If one school is established, will there be one Headteacher? If so does that mean that we will lose the current Headteacher?

*Answer* - There is no guarantee. It would depend on the proposal put forward. We don't want to lose experienced staff.

*Comment* – If it is decided to close the school, staff will start to leave prior to the opening of the new school. We need security. Children would be left with supply staff. We currently have three excellent Headteachers.

*Response* – It is acknowledged that where there is uncertainty staff will look elsewhere. Once the proposal is clear, we will need to act quickly to get the Federation to consider ways to retain staff.

*Question* – You talk about the regeneration within Hetton. The proposed sites are not in Hetton. Have you walked from this site to the proposed sites? Most parents have other children with them and pushchairs.

*Answer* – If the proposal goes forward then will have to deal with transport. The reason for the proposal was a long term strategy. The new school in the area would serve the community. Hetton Lyons serves their community and Easington Lane serves their community. In the future it is proposed to have three schools to serve each of the communities.

*Question* – What is the criteria for the chosen sites? Why were we not included when Hetton Lyons was built, it has only just opened? Why has this site not been chosen for the new school? This site is bigger than those proposed and has excellent links with the secondary school. You are proposing a site next to streets and shops. Children come from various areas to go to secondary school. Put the new primary school here next to the secondary school. The new baths would be excellent for transition. You should not dismiss this site.

*Answer* – The proposed new school site is to bring Eppleton, Hetton Primary and the Nursery families together. The appraisal has been done fairly. The proposed sites are of equal distance to Eppleton and Hetton Primary.

*Comment* – Not for us, it is favourable to Eppleton.

*Response* – The site options are between the two schools. If you feel you want us to consider another site please note this in your responses.

*Comment* – We did last time and you took no notice. There is loads of land here and we believe it is viable. None of the proposed sites are suitable.

*Response* – There will be feasibility studies undertaken on the proposed sites. If you feel there is another option, let us know.

*Comments* – I do not oppose a new school.

*Response* – Sites and feasibility outcomes would be discussed with the federated Governing Bodies.

*Comment* – We would like reasons why it is or is not viable.

*Proposal* – The future of teaching and learning is in our best interests. The Headteacher, staff and governors would support the need to put this site forward for consideration as part of the consultation.

*Question* – Would you look at this proposal?

*Answer* – Yes, it will be considered, but Eppleton could say the same. If we did a feasibility study here we would also need to do one at Eppleton.

*Question* – Are the other two schools opposed to the proposal?

*Answer* – Eppleton is meeting tonight.

*Comment* - Hetton Le Hole Nursery opposed to it.

*Question* – Where did the cluster come from? Is there a demand in this part of Hetton if Hetton Lyons is full?

*Answer* – It is based on the admissions cluster that feed into Hetton Secondary School, which have been around for approximately five years.

*Question* – Do you look at close proximity within the area?

*Answer* – We did look at this in the early consultations.

*Question* – If Hetton cluster had a problem, how did Hetton Lyons come out of the equation? We have been left to pick up the pieces. You will get a new school, we will get nothing.

*Answer* – Hetton Lyons opened in September 2008. The planning commenced well in advance of this. This was not part of the review of surplus places; it was because of the need to have a new

build to address its condition. We did look at Hetton Primary numbers at the time, if you had been included the Primary School would have been too big which would have been problematic.

*Comment* – This is unfair. You said you knew the birth rates.

*Question* – I am a mother of a child who attends Eppleton. It will not be viable to rebuild on Eppleton as they are building a new road. I have two children, one attends Eppleton and one attends Hetton. Why can't the new school be here?

*Answer* – The action taken forward would be to do a feasible study at Eppleton and Hetton and we would feedback.

*Question* – Most efficient is not always the best. The three proposed sites will result in travelling further, all have access difficulties. We have a situation where we want to maintain all the staff from the three schools. Why reinvent the wheel? What about the Headteacher? The Community Association site overlooks two lakes. The site behind Finnegan's is next to a quarry. Would one school be more efficient? There will be too many children for one school and would result in trouble which would not be controlled. Why not rebuild all three schools smaller on their existing sites? There may be cost implications but would get good community will.

*Answer* - We understand that each site option has its challenges. We will share feedback on the proposal with regard to the sites. There is clearly community concerns with regard to the proposed sites. A single school would be more sustainable.

*Comment* – Build three new schools like Hetton Lyons.

*Response* – Fixed costs would remain the same.

*Comment* – One option in October 2008 was to amalgamate with Hetton Lyons.

*Response* – Numbers had not dropped so significantly at the time the Hetton Lyons School was being planned and so amalgamation would have resulted in a much bigger school. The PAN has been reduced to 60.

*Comment* – Hetton numbers will now drop, as Hetton Lyons is a new school. Parents don't look at teaching and learning they look at facilities.

*Response* – We will look at this as part of the consultation.

*Comment* – The road has been discussed at an Eppleton meeting.

*Question* – Eppleton has separate yards for Infant and Juniors. The nursery has disabled children with soft play areas. In Hetton we get good education and we are like one big family. If we move into one big school the parents will not be happy, as they will need to walk miles. Can you come here and close this school without a reason?

*Answer* – The capacity is 154, you have 103 on roll, approximate 50 surplus places (30%). The LA need to act.

*Question* - (NUT) The consultation process is very clear. At the last meeting you presented six options, how are we here now? The Local Authority doesn't know what size of the new school will be. The proposal does not say anything about a 'new school'; it says 'a single school to be established'. There is no mention of a 'new site' within the proposal. If funding changes you have no Plan B. You just hope to get money.

*Answer* – It is our understanding that it will be a new school on a new site. We will feedback back your comment.

*Question* – (NUT) This is not even one of the original proposals. What are we consulting on?

*Answer* – The single school proposed is to be on a new site to bring the three schools together.

*Question* – (NUT) What if the Governing Bodies do not co-operate?



*Answer* – The Local Authority has a duty to reduce surplus places.

*Question* – Who signed off the previous consultation minutes? Cllr Mrs Anderson was wrongly quoted in the minutes with regard to Cabinet's responsibility for decision making and the letter she had received.

*Answer* – This will be pursued.

***Note: Cllr Anderson was contacted about the above as she was not in attendance at this meeting. Cllr Anderson confirmed she had not asked anyone to raise this point at the meeting.***

*Question* – When will the minutes be available?

*Answer* – As soon as possible and in good time to inform responses to this stage of the consultation.

*Question* – How do the pupils in school now feel? What do we tell pupils? How do we deal with pupils during the process?

*Answer* – The whole process is about children and getting a good education and start in life.

*Question* – I choose this school as it has small classes. This will affect the SATs results, as this will knock the pupils back. What is the time limit or do we take pupils out for security?

*Answer* – We need to give all staff a timeline once the proposal has been considered by Cabinet. If the Governing Body does not wish to work with the Local Authority, then the Local Authority would need to make the decisions.

*Question* – When will this be?

*Answer* – Would hope to move to federation in the Summer Term in order to drive this forward in order to give staff reassurances.

*Question* – What plans have you for this and the Eppleton site?

*Answer* – We have no plans at present.

*Question* – Are the three potential sites in your plans?

*Answer* – If we had plans for the proposed school sites, it would look as if we have pre-empted a decision.

*Comment* – It all boils down to the new school, so you can say down London 'Look what we have done for Sunderland'. The Council don't know how Hetton works.

*Response* – It is part of the strategic plan.

*Comment* - I am pleased to hear the community responses. If you want the site here you will need to justify your reason of this. The majority of pupils go to Hetton Secondary. I am a governor of Hetton Secondary and have been given food for thought. I have been reassured that parents have their say not just the Governing Bodies. Hetton Town council were missed out on the consultation process.

*Question* - You talk about regeneration of Hetton. What about the pupils that come from the proposed 400 new houses. Where will these children go?

*Answer* – If the proposals go forward, part of the process will include these proposed houses. The new school will be able to be extended if required. 300 houses are proposed to be demolished.

*Question* – Should you not wait until the houses are built, and then look at the surplus places?

*Answer* – The housing development regeneration is a 15-year plan. No houses have been built yet.

*Comment* – We don't want to be left like Hetton Lyons with demountables.

*Response* – There are some myths around this similarly at Easington Lane Primary. Demountables are there to take the large year groups at the top end of the school. The PAN used to be 70. The PAN has been changed to 60 and as the large year groups move through the school the temporary accommodation will be removed. It was planned that way with the support of both schools.

*Question* – What is the intake for Hetton Lyons this year?

*Answer* – 60

*Question* – Are the admissions being scrutinised? Where the pupils are coming from?

*Answer* – Around 28 children currently live out of the authority. 90 children currently travel between one and twenty miles to Hetton Lyons.

*Question* – Do they get in the school if there are outside the catchment area?

*Answer* – If they request a place by parental choice, and there is a place, they will get in.

*Question* – Do we have a choice? Is there a guarantee that all pupils could go to Hetton Lyons if they so wished?

*Answer* – Based on projections and numbers, the new school could accommodate the pupils. Places may also be available at Hetton Lyons based on the admissions criteria.

*Question* – The site may cost more than what is thought. Behind Finnegan's used to be a salt heap. Hetton Nursery was built in 1943, however built within this is the ethos inside. People will chose Hetton Lyons due to the new building. How long will it take? Staff and pupils still have not had any answers. We believe that there are no options from the previous six that were presented. We are now very confused.

*Comment* - (Chair) We are not here to make the decisions, you are here to air your views on the proposals. I have gone through something similar at Washington. The council had learned from previous experiences and are now giving more time for schools to change. Maybe it is unfair to be critical to the Officers when they are seeking your views and comments. You can respond in various ways to the consultation. There are a number of uncertainties at present, however you need to decide what you want.

*Comment* – We have not been listened to. We proposed this site the last time. Also had it said in the feedback sheets?

*Response* – (Chair) I acknowledge your comment.

*Comment* – In November 2008 we were told if this closed we were guarantee a place at Hetton Lyons.

*Response* – This would have been the case if the Option 3 proposal was adopted. However we are not consulting on this option.

*Comment* – I have four children and am unable to get to any of these sites.

*Comment* - – If it goes ahead and it was decided to go to Hetton Lyons and fight for a place, some will be left out, then you will have surplus places in the new school.

*Response* – We are not suggesting that you go to Hetton Lyons.

*Comment* - We might have too.

*Response* – There are people who live closer to the proposed new sites. Some may choose the new school if they live closer.

*Question* – What if they do not want to go to the new school?

*Answer* – You have a right to express a preference for a place at any school. The Local Authority is providing sufficient places in the Hetton cluster to accommodate all the pupils. If you live in Hetton you will be guaranteed a place in one for the schools.

*Question* – What about those from Houghton?

*Question* – When will you know you have got the money?

*Answer* - The money is coming from the Primary Strategy of Change. A bid had already been submitted and been approved. The first two years will be a new school for St Joseph's, Sunderland and Maplewood School.

*Question* – Are you guaranteed the money from the Government?

*Answer* – The Government have said 'Education, Education, Education' and have committed to this.

*Question* – If Government changes and with the credit crunch, what will happen to Hetton Primary after identifying a site?

*Answer* – If there was any change to the programme it may slow down any programme or there may be a need to have a signification rethink.

*Comment*– When you are younger you prefer a smaller school. We are united and against closer.

*Question* – We are all against the proposal and will fight. We feel that the last time we were here, we did return the forms and had our views recorded. You are again asking for comments. Is it worth it! Can we do anything? Can we stop the proposal? No one accepts this at Hetton, Hetton Le Hole Nursery or at Eppleton.

*Answer* – We need to address the surplus places.

*Comment* – In Murton they have had to extend a new building due to a baby boom.

*Answer* – New builds are planned in order that they can be extended in the future if required.

*Question* – Provision of places change all the time. If you build a 1.5 form entry and the numbers drop will you close the school 20 years later?

*Answer* – This is a strategic option and pupil planning will be an important part of the process.

*Question* – When saying about the new school and bigger classrooms, if up to 30 pupils in one class will they have four teachers. Because we have one teacher and one non teaching assistant in a class of 20 here.

*Answer* – There would be one teacher for a class of 30. Some pupils may need additional support and have an assistant in the classroom.

*Comment* – My children need extra support regardless of the size for the class and gets it here.

*Question* – What about if we end up with supply staff. We are no further forward.

*Comment* - The decision will be taken in April 2009. We need to remain positive.

*Comment* – I cannot be positive, I can't believe what is happening.

*Question* – Why merge into one? 'Every Child Matters' except for ours!

*Question* – Can we communicate face to face at the Cabinet meeting?

*Answer* – Usually Council Officers attend the meeting and put views across.

*Question* - Where is our voice? Why can we not go and put our own views across? The council Officers will have a bigger influence.

*Answer* – Hetton Primary had invited Cllr Mrs P Smith (Portfolio) to school. Access has been made available and your school took advantage of this.

*Comment* – Proposals for the sites - You say willing to work with other schools but none are aware of this proposed site. These need to be pushed to make everyone aware and put us on the map.

*Comment* – Cllr P Smith was invited into school to show what we are all about. Would it be good to have a parental voice and have the opportunity to attend the council Scrutiny Committee?

*Response* – (Cllr Tate) The Scrutiny Committee make recommendations to the Cabinet. Get a group together and put your points to them. The Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public. It would be up to Cllr P Stewart (Chair of Scrutiny).

*Response* - We will feed this back to Cabinet.

The Officers agreed to make available the minutes of the staff, governors and public meetings to the Headteacher within a reasonable time.

Further question were invited. None were forthcoming.

## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARENTS/CARERS MEETING STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING AT HETTON LE HOLE NURSERY SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2009**

#### **Present**

C Anderson, G Armbruster, L Barrass, S Bonsall, A Bowater, I Bowater, B Connolly, D Craggs, R Craggs, D Crake-Merani, A Grey, H L Hepworth, S James, A Ivison, G Lambton, J Lambton, M Lishburn, A Morley, P Smith, J Stephenson, M Thornton, A Trevitt, K Wallace, D Wilson, T Wilkinson

#### **Clerk for the Meeting**

Linda Jobson (Governor Support Team)

#### **Chair for Meeting**

Cllr Mrs D Snowdon

#### **Officers in Attendance**

K Moore (Deputy Director of Children's Services)  
V Thompson (School Place Planning Manager)  
L Barnes (HR Advisor)  
K Rooks (Early Years Foundation Stage SIO)  
R Putz (Extended Services Manager Early Years Settings & Partnerships)  
E Mills (Communications Officer)

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

Keith Moore gave a brief introduction of those Officers present at the meeting.

Cllr Snowdon thanked the parents/carers for their attendance. It was reported that Cllr Snowdon was a councillor in Washington and was present to be independent and to Chair the meeting. Cllr Snowdon said that notes of the meeting were being made but requested people to highlight if they wanted to ensure that a particular question or point was recorded in the minutes.

Cllr Heron declared an interest as a local councillor and indicated that he would be present as an observer only.

Val reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There could be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Val reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20 October-28 November 2008 on proposed options and noted the school involved.

The options for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Le Hole Nursery were noted as presented.

Val explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues

emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinize in detail the process for the development of proposals.

Val highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

Val concluded Outcome of the options analysis. A new school to replace Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Le Hole Nursery would complete the regeneration of schools in the Hetton/Eppleton area.

If Hetton Le Hole Nursery closed and early years provision was established at Eppleton and Hetton Primary the costs associated with the development of the facilities, coupled with the additional recurrent costs, would not make this an economical option.

The proposal for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Nursery was therefore, to establish a single school in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term Governing Bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.

Val reported that the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) was a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland. 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas rebuilt/taken out of use and 35% improved.

The Pupil numbers from September 2008 census were noted. The impact of proposals on surplus position would be a total of 140 from Eppleton/Hetton.

Val reported that the resources available to all schools will be targeted at direct delivery of education to pupils. New school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places. Fixed costs to be released for distribution to all schools to increase the amount allocated per pupil

Val tabled the potential site.

- Community Association (end of Summerson Street)
- Former Public Deport (behind Finnegans pub)
- Area adjacent to the former Springboard/Dairy (former colliery houses)

Val gave details on the next steps and concluded that Cabinet would receive a report in April 2009. Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation

Cllr Mrs Snowdon invited questions.

*Question* – What is the scale of the plan?

*Answer* – Not sure, I will find out and forward the information.

*Question* – If feasibility studies is part of the procedure, why was it not presented at the Stage 3 of the consultation process in November 2008?

*Answer* – We would not commission feasibility studies unless the proposal is agreed by Cabinet.

*Comment* – We weren't included in the first stages. Not all parents were given the same time to consider the options.

*Response* – The nursery was not part of the first two stages but they were about the data. Consultation on the options was Stage 3 and the nursery was included in that stage.

*Question* – It's all done and dusted, we will close, there is nothing different from the November 2008 meeting. Do you have grounds to close the Nursery? We have met targets, we have no surplus places. Can we go to the Department of Children and School and Families to appeal?

*Answer* – There is a huge legal process prior to any proposed closure. Cabinet need to approve the proposals to go ahead, but not how that will be implemented at this stage. If Governing Bodies are minded to go towards federation they will help to shape the way forward. If one school closes and another school is named as the receiving school, officers will need to present a report to Cabinet on how to achieve this and will be a statutory notice period when objections could be lodged.

*Question* - You have not answered my question. We have no surplus places; do you have the right to shut us down?

*Answer* – The Cabinet have a strategic decision to make and are entitled to make that decision.

*Question* - Are you able to close the school? Do you have a legal right?

*Answer* – Surplus places is one area. There is a potential opportunity to develop a new school that is integrated from birth to 11 years of age. If this went ahead all schools in Hetton (after the rebuild of Hetton School) would have been renewed.

*Comment* - The governors did ask about the grounds on which the Nursery could close and there are criteria. The Local Authority could argue that they could meet the criteria. We are here to capture your views which will be put to Cabinet.

*Question* – Will you go through the criteria?

*Answer* – I will go through the criteria.

Criteria 1 The LA was consistently funding numbers of empty places - we have got the numbers of pupils on roll for the last four years and there have been surplus places The Nursery is funded for 50 places.

*Question* – Is this because we have 3 year olds?

*Answer* – The pupils must be three years of age in September for entitlement. The numbers were as follows: 2008 - 45, 2007 - 42, and 2006 – 36.

Criteria 2 Full consideration needed to be given to develop the school into a Sure Start Children's Centre, and there were clear, justifiable grounds for not doing so, for example: unsuitable accommodation, poor quality provision and low demand for places - Schools were written to and asked if they were interested in becoming a Children's Centre. Hetton Lyons was chosen following the process. Children's Centres offered full time Daycare and delivered services within the locality and do deliver to the Hetton cluster.

Criteria 3 Plans to develop alternative provision clearly demonstrated that it would be at least as equal in terms of quantity and quality of early years provision provided by the nursery school with no loss of expertise and specialisms

*Comment* – This is a Nursery School not a class

*Response* – The proposal is to have a single school from Birth to 11 year olds with Childcare. The site would be managed by the Governing Body to meet the needs of the new statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. There will be a number of guidelines to follow with regard to quality and quantity. There would be good quality access to outside provision.

*Comment* – Sunderland is taking away the nursery from the Centre of Hetton just like they did with the Doctors and also tried to take away the swimming baths. This is an ex-mining community and the council are trying to kill off this town. The nursery is in the Centre of Hetton that is why it is so successful. The plans are favourable to Eppleton not Hetton. This is political, all you want to do is to go to London and say 'we have built a new school'.

*Comment* - You all think this is funny and you are all smirking.

*Response* – I object to that comment. All Officers are going through a process. It has been noted that you do not agree. I object to any comment that Officers are not taking this seriously.

*Question* – We all live in Hetton and know what is best for the pupils in Hetton.

*Answer* - Your comments are recorded and we respect the difference of opinion.

*Comment* – There was a large number of responses against the proposal to close the nursery but you still put forward this proposal. Do you read all the reports; no one agrees with the proposal therefore we believe that our comments are not heard.

*Comment* – Last meeting was a nightmare with six proposals. I did not want to attend this meeting.

Criteria 4 Replacement provision was more accessible and more convenient for local parents.

*Comment* – This would not be accessible to Hetton Nursery.

*Response* – We have looked at where the pupils come from and have calculated distances.

*Comment* – Some grandparents bring the children into the nursery, the proposed sites would mean further to walk.

*Comment* – You are closing us for the sake of a few surplus places.

*Question* – It is sad, there are no surplus places, no budgets, and no feasibility study. Do you have a fourth site if others are not feasible? Why not build on Hetton Primary grounds?

*Answer* – Detailed consultation is about listening to potential alternatives.

*Comment* – No matter what we say you take no notice.

*Response* – If you have an alternative let us know about it. Officers have a responsibility to look at them and we will.

*Comment* – On one of the proposed sites we will have to go through Market Street, the Community Association area is flooded every year.

*Response* – If you submit other ideas we will look at them.

*Question* – If you have no plans, no costings and no feasibility study, how can you go to Cabinet with a proposal?

*Answer* – These are potential site options which will be explored. Any others will be looked at.

*Question* – Are there any cost benefits? How can Cabinet make an informed decision if no feasibility studies have been undertaken?

*Answer* – Cabinet will be making a decision in principle on the proposal for a single school. If Cabinet agree the proposal feasibility studies will be done and colleagues will be consulted. No one has said that we are unable to mark this as a potential site.

*Comment* – You should have done a feasibility study first.

*Response* – Land and Property know the sites very well.

*Question* - This is a similar document to the last time and we note that surplus places need removing. The figure is based on population. 10% of surplus places appear to be a small amount of pupils. There may be a population growth due to the recession. You are talking about a new school in 2 or 3 years time. What provision have you if the population does increase after a decrease?



*Answer* – When new schools are built, the potential for extension to these in the future is considered in the design.

*Comment* - In the report presented, you say that by reducing surplus numbers (140) at Eppleton and Hetton Primary that this will address the purpose of the exercise. This does not affect Hetton Le Hole Nursery.

*Question* - You mention replicating experience, will the same be replicated, and the fact that we are open 50 weeks per year?

*Answer* – We cannot guarantee that the size will be replicated.

*Comment* – Therefore you are not replicating the services currently offered.

*Response* – Yes, the new build will include provision for nursery and Daycare. There will be play areas on site based on standard requirements. Birth to five year olds would normally have separate outside provision to the rest of the school. We need to meet the requirements of the new Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines.

*Question* - Will there be separate external and internal areas like we have now? My son does physio here.

*Answer* – The build will be DDA compliant.

*Comment* – We are not talking about accessibility.

*Response* – We cannot talk about child specific.

*Comment* – You will only provide 'standard' requirements.

*Response* – No, it will be the Governing Bodies decision based on the requirement of who will be attending. We cannot guarantee what the Governing Body will agree to set up with regard to provision.

*Comment* – The Nursery does not need replicating as we have what we want here.

*Comment* – Replicating expertise – our Headteacher could never be replicated.

*Response* – We will follow the guidelines as laid out in the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. There will be a required level of staff and qualifications both for the Nursery and Childcare.

*Comment* - The current standards will not be the same as what we have here. This is a good performing school.

*Question* – We have the local knowledge of the Community Centre area. There is no access. The site behind Finnegan's used to store salt which overlooks the quarry. Where is the money coming from?

*Answer* – The majority of the money is coming from the Primary Strategy for Change as part of a 14 year programme.

*Comment* – You have been given money and you need to spend it.

*Response* – A number of schools in Sunderland would love the opportunity to have a new build.

*Comment* – Let them have it.

*Comment* – You are building a school where it is not needed. We don't want it. As tax payers we have already contributed to the extension of the nursery.

*Response* – Eppleton was rebuilt on the same site 25 years ago after a fire. The development of this was at no cost to the tax payer as it was covered by insurance. Quick decisions needed to be made at the time. If built today it may have been built differently.

*Comment* – We have just extended the Nursery to include a Community Room.

*Response* – The core building was built in 1941.

*Question* – If we had one school, what would happen to the pupils of Hetton Le Hole Nursery who did not wish to go a new school with a nursery class?

*Answer* – There will be an application process.

*Comment* – If the nursery currently have 50 pupils and if 10 leave and go elsewhere the numbers in the new school will drop.

*Comment* – You are talking about primary surplus pupils not nursery. We feel that the nursery is being targeted. This is a good nursery in every aspect. It has been recognised by OfSTED, we have no surplus places, and this is about surplus places across the City. We are oversubscribed with waiting lists. If you close Eppleton and Hetton and build them a new one this would not affect the Nursery.

*Response* – As part of the Strategy we have included Hetton Le Hole Nursery with Eppleton and Hetton Primaries, if we did not it would leave Hetton Le Hole Nursery as being the only school in Hetton not having the opportunity for a new build. We want 21<sup>st</sup> Century builds for all our schools from which pupils would benefit.

*Comment* – This is a traditional nursery. I have brought 8 children to this nursery over a period of 18 years. None of them have been in trouble and have had a proper education. My eldest daughter works in Eppleton.

Cllr Snowdon acknowledged the comments and indicated that she understood the concerns as she had gone through a similar process herself as a parent from a Washington School that had gone through a similar process.

*Question* – Can you justify why you think a nursery class is better than a Nursery School? Our children actually get a better start in life in education because this is a Nursery School not a class.

*Answer* - Quality is guided by OfSTED and we have good quality and outstanding Foundation Stage Units across the City in a variety of different methods.

*Comment* – We have it here. If it is not broken, don't mend it. Sunderland should be proud of our nursery.

*Response* We are proud of all our schools in Sunderland.

*Comment* – Childcare and Nursery – when I told my child that the nursery may close he was horrified. My child loves the teachers and still wants to be at the nursery. The support received is excellent. To close the nursery would be a total crime.

*Question* - If all three schools closed and a new one opened, would this be open to private investors? Could it become an Academy? If so what would this mean?

*Answer* – We would need to take this into consideration if the proposal was agreed to close a school.

*Question* – What if an investor wanted it?

*Answer* – There various ways of achieving a single school.

*Question* – Would the Local Authority still be the employer if a private investor won the new school.

*Answer* - Academies still have links with the Local Authority with regard to employment. The Governing Body would become the employer, which is something that would need to be considered.

*Comment* – Wouldn't this be frightening if we broke away from the Local Authority.

*Response* – An Academy is seen as a separate entity but they still receive a number of the Local Authority Services.

*Question* – How are they measured?

*Answer* – They are measured the same as all secondary schools and would still receive an OfSTED inspection.

*Question* – What are the criteria for the size of the building and play areas under the Early Years guidelines?

*Answer* – We will get this information to you.

*Question* – Would we have a separate Headteacher for the nursery?

*Answer* – No. There are good examples of Foundation Stage Leadership across the City. This would be the decision of the Governing Body with regard to the staffing structure. The Foundation Stage will need a structure with a leader.

*Comment* - We have an excellent Headteacher, standards and the quality of provision would drop if the new school was led by a Primary Headteacher.

*Reponses* – We have good quality Primary Headteachers.

*Comment* - Good, we are outstanding.

*Response* – The nursery is good with outstanding features

*Comment* - One Headteacher cannot do the same job as three.

*Question* – Will staff have to fight for their jobs? We want to stay here.

*Answer* – The Local Authority want to maintain high standards and staff affected from the schools would be expected to be retained where possible. HR would work with individuals.

*Question* - Does that mean bigger classes or mixed age classes with one Teacher with more pupils to control?

*Answer* – Under Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines the ratios for babies and younger pupils will be applied.

*Comment* – You are not giving us any guarantees. We don't want a new nursery class. We want to retain this nursery as it is, with the same staff. We don't want a new school and will be very upset if the proposal goes ahead. This is a very close knit community.

*Comment* - You said you want to hear our views around the proposals - is this a line of duty. We feel patronised that consideration has not been given to the present consultation. We feel our views have been and are still being ignored.

*Response* – We are sorry that you feel that way; it is not our intention to be patronising or to be seen as ignoring you. It is clear that there are disagreements with the proposals. It is our duty to report on the proposals in order to work together. It is acknowledged that Officers do not always get it right. Your feelings will be reflected in the consultation responses and reported to Cabinet. We respect that you have a right to have an opinion. I am a parent myself and understand the commitment of staff. Some schools in other areas have accepted the proposal to have a new school. We need to plan for the future. The nursery was built in 1941. The nursery is good and provides excellent support for the community.

*Comment* – I hear what is said, but you are in the position to influence Cabinet. I agree to disagree.

*Question* - Whose decision is it if all parents say no? Is there any point of the consultation? I believe the council has already made the decision.

*Answer* - We are here to consult on the proposal. Elected members of the Cabinet make the final decision.

*Question* - Cabinet make decisions on recommendations. Are they accountable if they go against the recommendations as previously stated by Cllr Mrs Anderson?

*Answer* – It is Cabinet's decision ultimately.

*Comment* - With the options available there is no mention about the education of the children and this should be paramount when considering closure of a school.

*Response* – We do not take account of achievement. We are looking at planning school places for the future. The nursery is part of the strategic approach.

*Question* – Why?

*Answer* – We acknowledge that the nursery is good with outstanding features as are other schools. We want to provide a new school in the area and wanted the nursery to be part of the proposal. We were also taking the opportunity to complete the regeneration of schools in the area.

*Comment* - Complete regeneration – You have 'ticked' a box and then we will be left alone for another 20 years.

*Comment* - Parents donate toys and clothes to the nursery and will continue to do so.

*Response* – We acknowledge the comment. There is potential to move to a new school and to remove surplus places.

*Comment* – This should not affect the nursery, looking at an opportunity for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School.

*Question* – Why are you consulting before you undertake the feasibility studies? We want the facts in order to make a decision.

*Answer* – The three sites are only proposed potential sites. Two of the sites were presented at the previous meeting. We had to be sure that there are no other plans for the sites before bringing them forward.

*Comment* – At the meeting in October 2008 the sites were not provided, we had to ask and they were emailed. These were received the day before the closing date of the previous consultation. We now have more information to digest. When will the feasibility studies outcome be made available?

*Response* – This was an opportunity to provide as much information as possible. We will look at the impact issues for the community and will provide as much information as possible before the end of the consultation period. The Cabinet are elected members, and the officers were unable to undertake further work as they could be seen to be pre-empting Cabinet's decision.

*Question* - Why are councillors that are elected members not allowed to voice their opinion?

*Answer* – Cllr Mrs Anderson took part in the Hetton Primary consultation process therefore she declared an interest at the Cabinet meeting.

*Comment* – Cllr Mrs Snowdon indicated that she was sure that Cllr Mrs Anderson would have voiced her opinion at another forum.

*Question* – Can you clarify if this is the final stage of the consultation?

*Answer* – This is the final stage in this school place planning exercise. There will be further consultation if the proposal goes forward.

*Question* – Why can we not get a feasibility study in 6 months time in order to put it on the board so we can make an educated decision?

*Answer* – The Cabinet will have made their decision on the proposal by then. The outcome of the feasibility study will be discussed by the federated Governing Bodies, if they agree to a federation. We don't have the flexibility to change the timetable. Additional time could be requested as part of your feedback to the consultation.

*Question* – How much information are you giving to councillors? How are they supposed to make a decision with lack of information?

*Answer* – The report to Cabinet does include financial information.

*Comment* – The Community Association site is known to flood, it will take a lot of tax payers' money to get it into an acceptable state.

*Response* – We have a good track record with regard to building new schools, and sites can pose their own difficulties but that will be brought out in the feasibility studies.

*Comment*- This does not give any satisfaction as a tax payer.

Further comments were invited. None were forthcoming.

Information was provided on how to respond to the consultation.

## **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MINUTES OF THE STAGE 4 PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT EPPLETON PRIMARY SCHOOL – 6.00 pm, Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

#### **Present**

Linda Anderson, Shaun Cunningham, Gavin College, Diane Crake-Merani, A. Derrick Senior, J. Dover, A. Dunleavy, C. England, T. Finlay, Stephen Foggin, Susan Foggin, L. Forster, T. Forster, A Forsyth, C. Fowler, L. Gilmore, Ken Gott, Lois Gott, Warren Gray, Tony Henderson, Juliana Heron, Cllr Robert Heron, Neil Hogg, M. James, Brian Johnson, N. Kendle, D.A Kindred, Victoria Medhurst, D. Partridge, M. Partridge, S. Ratcliffe, C. Richardson, J Richardson, Alan Robson, Lynn Scott, K.A. Thompson, A. Tinkler, M. Vonn(?), Cllr Colin Wakefield, D Wallace, A Welsh, David W. Wilson, Michelle Wines, Colin Young

#### **Clerk for the meeting**

Heather Maddison (Governor Support Team)

#### **Chair of the meeting**

Colin Clarke (Head of Land and Property)

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Paul Campbell (Head of Resources)  
Val Thompson (School Place Planning Manager)  
Lyn Barnes (HR Team Leader)  
Rachel Putz (Extended Services Manager)  
Fran Smith (Administrative Officer)  
Denise Willis (School Improvement Officer)  
Peter Lawson (Principal Planner)

An attendance list was circulated and all attendees were asked to sign at both the beginning and end of the meeting to try to ensure that any latecomers were recorded.

#### **School Place Planning for the Future**

Colin Clarke introduced himself as Chair of the meeting and introduced officers from the local authority and detailed the order of the meeting. He said that notes of the meeting were being made but requested people to highlight if they wanted to ensure that a particular question or point was recorded in the minutes and handed over to Paul Campbell to give the presentation.

Paul Campbell presented the background to the consultation, and the options that had been considered.

Paul reported that all Local Authorities had a statutory duty to plan school places. There could be no more than 10% surpluses across all schools. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue with currently 3,000 surplus primary places. There would be a drop of a further 1,000 pupils across the city in next 10 years and the position varied from area to area across the city.

Paul reminded everyone that Stage 3 consultations were held from 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008 – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008 on proposed options involving the following schools:

- Bernard Gilpin Primary
- Gillas Lane Primary
- Eppleton Primary
- Hetton Primary
- Hetton Nursery
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary

- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary
- Bexhill Primary
- Town End Primary

Paul provided details on the Options for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Nursery:-

Option 1 - Reduce PAN from 30 to 20 at Eppleton Primary and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity. Reduce PAN from 20 to 15 at Hetton Primary and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.

Option 2 - Amalgamate Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery, possibly on a new site.

Option 3 - Close Hetton Primary and name Hetton Lyons as receiving school.

Option 4 – Close Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery and name Eppleton as the receiving school on a possible new site.

Option 5 – Close Eppleton Primary and Hetton Nursery and name Hetton Primary as the receiving school on a possible new site.

Option 6 – Close Hetton Nursery and establish nursery provision at Eppleton and Hetton Primary in surplus accommodation

Paul explained the formulation of the proposals. The options appraisals were based on principles agreed previously by Cabinet and through consultation. The significant issues emerging from the responses to the consultation were included in the options appraisal. There were regular reports to the Children's Services Review Committee (CSRC) and the School Place Planning Executive Board. A sub-group of CSRC was established to scrutinise in detail the process for the development of proposals.

Paul highlighted the Synopsis of the Options Appraisal:-

- Community
- Buildings
- Early years and kitchen facilities
- Previous actions
- Alternative use for surplus
- Cross cluster issue
- Class size
- Competition

The conclusion of the options analysis was that a new school to replace Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery would complete the regeneration of schools in the Hetton/Eppleton area.

If Hetton Nursery closed and early years provision was established at Eppleton and Hetton Primary the costs associated with the development of the facilities, coupled with the additional recurrent costs, would be not make this an economical option.

The Proposal for Eppleton/Hetton Primary/Hetton Nursery was therefore, that a single school be established in line with the Primary Strategy for Change programme and timescales. In the immediate term governing bodies of all three schools to consider the establishment of a federation to assist and support in consultation and community involvement.

Paul explained the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) was a 14 year plan for 0-11 provision in the City of Sunderland which aimed that 15% of schools in the worst physical condition and/or in the most deprived areas would be rebuilt or taken out of use and the next 35% improved.

Paul advised upon the school pupil numbers from the September 2008 census. The proposal would remove 140 surplus places.

The funding implications of proposal would be that the resources available to all schools would be targeted at direct delivery of education to pupils. A new school would be operating in an efficient building with very few surplus places. Fixed costs would be released for distribution to all schools

to increase the amount allocated per pupil. Maps of potential sites, on a scale 1:5000 were distributed.

*Question* – Why are the sizes of the sites significantly different?

*Answer* – All the sites are larger than the minimum size and all are big enough to accommodate a new school.

*Comment* – These are the sites of the old Community Association which floods and is inaccessible, the old Council depot which is too small and the site of demolished houses.

*Comment* – Has anyone considered that the middle site would be on contaminated ground?

*Response* – Could we please allow Paul to complete the presentation and then take questions?

The timescale for implementation would be dependent on the Primary Strategy for Change programme and funding and would mean a minimum of four years lead in, that is 2013 at the earliest before a new build school would be ready.

The next steps would be a report to Cabinet in April 2009 and if the proposal is agreed for the three governing bodies to consider a federation. Members of the public were invited to submit their responses by Friday 20th March 2009.

*Question* – Has it been considered that the old council depot was used for the storage of road salt?

*Answer* – These are only potential sites; if the proposal went forward a feasibility study would be conducted.

*Question* – Would it not be sensible to do a feasibility study before going out to public consultation?

*Answer* – There are costs involved in feasibility studies and there is no point incurring these before the consultation finishes.

*Question* – Is it the case that a new housing estate is planned and this site is planned to be a ring road so the school has to be demolished?

*Answer* – There is outline planning permission for 400 houses and this has been included in the report to Cabinet. As discussed with governors, the formula usually used predicts 12 children per 100 houses.

Peter Lawson, Principal Planner was introduced to the meeting and explained that the roundabout was part of the Hetton Downs Area Action Plan which included a new access road. The road would have gone through the Cricket Clubhouse so plans had to be changed and the roundabout placed nearer to the school. The Planning Department has been waiting for the results of this consultation before proceeding.

*Question* – If we reduce the PAN to 25 would the school still be viable? Hetton nursery is at the centre of the community. There has been a lot of turmoil in this area due to private landlords but regeneration is now scheduled to happen. This school is at the heart of the community, there has been no vandalism and we have wanted to bring in the community to use the school for a long time.

*Question* – It is important to acknowledge the community aspect of the school. Whilst you have provided pupil numbers in this years Reception and Year 1 it is important to look at the figures over a number of years to see if there is generally fluctuation year by year. Using the formula 12 children per 100 households, given that 400 houses are to be built do you accept we can expect 48 additional pupils coming into the area?

*Response* – 300 houses are to be demolished giving a net of 100 houses.

*Answer* – These 300 houses have already gone so there are still 400 houses to be built in the area.



*Question* – Is it the case that nursery numbers are going down? And how does building a new school save money?

*Answer* – This isn't a one year position, we've shown that pupil numbers from Reception to year 6 are showing a long term trend down, this is also the case nationally and citywide.

*Question* – Would the schools be sustainable if nurseries were added

*Answer* – Two separate nurseries would not be sustainable but in one school this would be a viable option.

*Question* – The numbers in reception don't show a huge drop; is this drop not due to the recent demolition of houses?

*Answer* – Families from these houses moved close by and still attend the school.

*Comment* – (Councillor Wakefield) I'd like to declare an interest as I have a grandson at Hetton Primary.

*Question* – Are numbers going up or down?

*Answer* – There is a downward trend. The proposal for a single school does not specify the size, that would be decided upon nearer the time to the build. The 48 pupils from the new houses wouldn't be new children moving into Sunderland.

*Question* – Will these figures be available in the years to come to see if the plans were flawed?

*Answer* – Yes they would be analysed.

*Question* – Where will the money come from for the capital build?

*Answer* – Central Government would provide the finance.

*Comment* – The Government is already overcommitted and can't afford its promises.

*Response* – The Government has recently reaffirmed its programme.

*Question* – You haven't included the closure of Gillis Lane in the figures and this school is close to Eppleton Primary; has this been considered?

*Answer* – Pupils from Gillis Lane would transfer to Bernard Gilpin

*Question* – There is a midwife shortage and a baby boom in Sunderland. Has the current economic climate which usually leads to a baby boom been considered?

*Answer* – A baby boom doesn't always follow but the figures will be kept under review.

*Question* – If 100 houses generate 12 pupils what went wrong at Easington Lane and Hetton Lyons?

*Answer* – Easington Lane has a planned 1 form entry, Hetton Lyons a 2 form entry and the schools have been built for these figures. In Easington Lane the numbers in each year are about 30 and in Hetton Lyons there are bigger numbers in higher year groups, hence the temporary accommodation, but the numbers coming through are now about 60. As the big classes leave the temporary accommodation will be removed.

*Comment* – Shouldn't the Local Authority have waited till the children left so they could have had proper classrooms.

*Comment* – These figures are the same as we were given earlier, but we didn't know how many houses were planned; no concrete figures were given to the school. The figure of 12 children per 100 households doesn't seem right; one estate of just over 40 houses has produced 31 children. We had been told 200 houses were planned but there are actually 400 houses planned. The

figures for the nursery aren't correct. The Local Authority figures are based on 80% but the nursery is over 100% full. The right figures haven't been presented to us.

*Comment* – We were promised these figures would be made available to us at the next meeting.

*Response* – The proposed housing regeneration over the next 15 years forecasts up to 451 houses replacing 300 dwellings.

*Comment* – 300 have already gone; social housing is planned so we can expect lots of children.

*Response* – The nursery numbers vacancies are based on Autumn figures; the January figures show the nursery to be 100% full, not 107% - the figures do fluctuate.

*Comment* – Where are our elected members? Has there been a gagging order!

*Response* – (Councillor) I have a grandson at Hetton Primary and so can't take part in this discussion.

*Response* – (Councillor) there is no gagging order, keeping schools open is our priority.

*Comment* – 48 extra children would affect the Eppleton Primary figures.

*Question* – Are paid childcare figures taken into consideration?

*Answer* – These haven't been included in the equation.

*Comment* – The roundabout has been put on hold till the school place planning finished; if this is not a suitable site and the school stayed here would there be no other options: no road, no houses - no children.

*Response* – Technically the road could go between the school and the cricket club.

*Question* – How close to the school would this be?

*Answer* – Close to the school and would include access into the school.

*Question* – Are you aware that the cricket club plans to have masts in its ground.

*Answer* - No we weren't aware.

*Question* - Can we clarify if the location of the road would impact on a possible rebuild on this site?

*Response* – Any rebuild would be considered.

*Question* – Do we know what numbers have applied for places for September for Eppleton Primary?

*Answer* – 22, 1 down from last year.

*Question* – What planning permission has been granted and are there any plans for building on this site?

*Answer* – Figures at September were planning permission has been granted for 450 houses over 15 years. There are no plans for building homes on this site.

*Comment* – It's very surprising that the road and the school can co-exist, and the road leading off a main road, the A182. If the school was removed it would make the roundabout unsustainable.

*Comment* – The consultation is very vague i.e. one school. We are very worried and concerned that the map may be misleading to public attendees, showing these 3 sites, as this school may be the site of the one school. If this proposal goes through I am concerned that no more consultation will take place.

*Response* – Absolutely not. Once cabinet make a decision on this proposal how it is carried out will include consultation with stakeholders hence the suggestion of a federation.

*Question* – One school – can we say on this site?

*Answer* - At this stage these 3 sites have been put forward.

*Question* – Profit is being put before considerations of access and traffic – how will children get to a new school, by bus?

*Answer* – Distances have been looked at, we know the current addresses of pupils attending and are aware that pupils move across the community. Safety and how children get to school are paramount.

*Comment* – There is no access to 2 of these sites.

*Response* – This would be considered as part of the feasibility study.

*Comment* – We don't want to lose schools, the pub and church have already closed, the school is the centre of the community, and Hetton Primary is in a similar position. Standards and ethics, the community strength in the area are reasons for young people returning to the community to have their children educated.

The Chair of the Governing Body informed the meeting that he had spoken to the Chairs of the other two schools and they had agreed that they would not form a federation.

*Question* – Do you have another plan apart from this one?

*Answer* – No.

*Comment* – The fantastic Ofsted's at Eppleton Primary and Hetton Nursery were the reason for my family moving to this area. I'm very concerned that communities need these schools.

*Question* – When does this round of consultations finish?

*Answer* – Responses must be returned by 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and the report will go to Cabinet in April.

*Comment* – I'd like to advise all members of the public to fill in the response forms.

*Question* – Since the last meeting 3 sites have been proposed, why weren't these proposed originally.

*Answer* – We have been looking at potential sites for a new school to replace 3 schools so we've looked at sites that are as far as possible equidistant from the current schools.

*Question* – Why not keep Eppleton Primary

*Answer* – We have proposed a new school but now we are aware that consultees would like this site considered.

*Comment* – This looks like a done deal, there is a possibility that children will have to be moved and staff will move. Parent numbers here are down on those who attended the last meeting and this process itself could well impact on numbers at the school.

*Comment* – It does look like a done deal, all parents responded last time and asked for the site of Eppleton Primary.

*Answers* – All responses went to Cabinet.

*Question* – A 4<sup>th</sup> site – does that mean demolish this school and build a new one here?

*Answer* – The only proposal so far is for a single school. We did not put either this site or Hetton Primary forward as potential sites.

*Question* – We are still making the assumption we will have 1 school but we aren't for this. We don't want any schools shut. We don't know what a new school would be like, what a new Headteacher would be like.

*Answer* – It depends how the proposal was implemented, for example if this school was kept open we would already have staff and a Headteacher.

*Comment* – We want it to be known that governors are against a single school and against a federation.

*Response* – We acknowledge there is a lot of distrust, and there would need to be a lot of preparatory work. If this plan was turned down we would need to reformulate plans.

*Question* – Was the weight of the response from the earlier consultation in favour of a single school. If not, how was this proposal formulated?

*Answer* – (referred to the synopsis of options appraisal slide) There is equal weighting to each point.

*Comment* – Schools admissions have dropped. There is a new school at Hetton Lyons. Surely the school with the lowest admissions could have been split between other schools. Hetton Primary is within yards of Hetton Lyons. We could have 2 schools at each end of Hetton. Hetton Lyons should have been larger to include Hetton Primary. The overflow would have come to this school.

*Response* – It is a long time since Hetton Lyons was planned and was not part of the current process.

*Question* – Did the Cabinet report include all the responses?

*Answer* – All on the official response forms, these were easy to analyse and all numbers of the responses were recorded and passed onto the Cabinet.

*Question* – Can we complain to the DCFS about how this has been done?

*Answer* – This is a local issue and the DCFS would simply pass it back to us. If you are unhappy with the process you should complain to the Ombudsman.

*Comment* – We were invited for consultation last time. This process hasn't been fair.

*Comment* – The last time the PDF forms couldn't be opened, so we had to email all the responses and we've just been told these weren't taken into consideration. This school is important for the community. It would cost £54,000 to bring the school up to date, but over £5M for a new building. Our previous responses haven't been taken into account. We have already made alternative use of surplus space, made an arts and crafts room as per government initiative, a purpose built room – praised by Ofsted; a computer suite for 30 people; we have implemented a new literacy project in our refurbished library and the children enjoy school.

*Comment* – Schools are about children. I am a parent who travels to Eppleton Primary from outside the area and it would be a tragedy to close this school.

*Comment* – The previous consultation stated that there were no emails received but we already know of some which puts into question all the figures stated here.

*Comment* – Thanks to everyone for supporting the school and I'd like to encourage everyone to fill in the response forms.

*Question* – Can forms be available at Hetton Library.

*Answer* – Yes, we will make sure they are available there.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Hylton Red House Primary and Nursery School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 12 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	8 (1 nursery)	2		
Headteacher	1 (nursery)			
Governor				
School Staff	1 (nursery)			
Resident				
Pupil				
Other				

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- I agree with the proposal to build a new school in the area. I appreciate that parents will have reservations about moving but if the primary school is built on the secondary school site, then the whole community will benefit from everything being on one site and the children will become familiar with secondary school surroundings before they are 11. Surely this will make the transition much easier, and also the primary school could use the secondary school facilities eg sports hall/swimming pool/IT suites etc so pupils become familiar and comfortable with secondary surroundings throughout their primary life. I would rather the new primary was built on this site because the playing field sites are used by people everyday, not just by football teams on a weekend. Whilst there are alternative football pitches close by ie Marley Pots/Thompson Rd/Downhill Sports Complex, there are no open spaces that people of the Red House community can use. The playing fields are somewhere free of charge, where people can walk their dogs, children can play football, like they do everyday, not just weekends like the football teams do. It would really be a shame to take away an open space in the middle of an estate, something that is very rare.
- I think that the location of Hylton Redhouse School is ideal where it is situated now. I would suggest that if a new school is to be built it should be built on the playing field next to the primary school in the primary school grounds. I can't understand repairs have already been carried out on the school eg: Dining area windows, new walls built to form a more safety pathway for the children, New Fence. Why spend money when you already probably know the future plans for Hylton Redhouse Primary School. I as a parent would feel really strongly about moving the school to a different location. If this did happen I would be considering moving my children to a different school. I believe Hylton Redhouse primary and nursery schools are both excellent. Fair enough if there is surplus spaces surely that's not a bad thing. Teachers then have more time with their pupils if numbers are lower.
- I think option 3 sounds the best and obvious choice and I think building a new school on the old comprehensive site is a good choice as you will have Red House Nursery, Infants/Juniors and Seniors all more or less on one big site. When I went to Redhouse Comp we never ever used the bottom football fields, once in five years we only ever used the all weather track and rugby field at the side of it so there is plenty of room for a new school. On the other site, I think it's too close to the old people's home they are there for a rest not to be pestered with school kids.
- Knowing the age of Redhouse Primary school I feel building a new school would be the best option. As to where to build a new school, I feel the proposed site behind Pickersgill House would be the best place for it, as I do not feel exposing "pre-comp" children to the daily activities some comp kids get up to is in the best interest of the children.
- I think that the information was okay but did not tell you when or where the schools will close and be rebuilt. I did not understand about the options. I think that rebuilding the schools and putting the school in an area that is close to Red House and Willow Fields would be okay for both child and parents. I just want what best for my child to have a good learning and be with her friends.
- I have attended two meetings at Hylton Red House Primary as my daughter is in year 1. Several proposals were made and sites mentioned but have heard nothing since. By the time these plans come about my daughter may have already left the school as we weren't told when it would happen but I would still like to know what will happen to the school.
- Excellent plan for the schools growth and future, am curious to know when this planned proposal if agreed would begin and finish and what would happen to the current building and its pupils when development commences.

- Having attended a couple of meetings and aired my views/concerns I feel the powers that be, have only involved the parents etc in the consultation exercise to keep us quiet, in my opinion the decisions regarding the school closure were already agreed as is usually the case in this type of situation. From the 2 sites marked for use for the school I would object strongly to it being sited within the academy as I wouldn't want my children exposed to the foul language etc from the teenagers entering and exiting the school. The conversations can be very graphic and disgusting. The primary and nursery schools should therefore be separate to the academy.
- My personal view is for HRH primary to remain on the current site. I believe combining schools, and therefore creating a larger volume of pupils, could possibly hinder education. I also believe that Willow Fields has more of an affinity with Southwick rather Red House (having originally come from the Willow Fields area). Changing sites, and therefore schools, is a challenging time for young children and my preferred option is for Red House to remain. Also bearing in mind the cost of the recent improvements made to the school grounds. The children are happy and that is the main objective. Is the upheaval really necessary?
- Please keep this nursery as I have no where to take my son and this nursery is excellent and well run.

### **Comments from Headteacher**

- I have led in developing HRH nursery school for over 15 years, to enhance the facilities and practice. The outdoor area particularly provides an excellent learning environment for our children. I regret the fact that because we are on the same site as the primary school, we are included in the proposals.
- However, I am in favour of a new building single primary school to service Hylton Red House and Witherwack communities.
- I would still ask the authority to keep options open for building a Foundation Stage school & Children's Centre on an adjoining site to the new primary school (utilising any funding that is made available for this in the future)
- I would ask that community facilities, similar to the new Southwick Primary school, would be incorporated into the school.
- I would ask that a high priority is given to following the new EYFS Framework (Enabling Environments), to provide adequate indoor space and outside areas for the foundation stage (with not just hard surfacing and a token amount of grassed area which is the case at Southwick).
- All classes should have cloakroom areas within the classroom and direct access to the outdoor area.
- The three schools concerned will need support and guidance in the interim in developing a federation. I would like information from the Authority on what this "soft federation" will involve.
- I would like to point out that the nursery has very well qualified and experience staff and would like reassurance that they will be given every opportunity to fill suitable posts in a new school.

### **Comments from Staff**

- It seems inevitable but unnecessary that HRH nursery school will be replaced. If unfortunately means the closure and amalgamation of our nursery school which Ofsted has deemed to be excellent. A new build is an exciting prospect with the proviso that planning and building includes continued outstanding provision for the foundation stage enabling the children to continue to have the same level of professional input as in previous years. Any replacement school will require to be built on a large enough site to enable the children to have access to a spacious outdoor area not only for physical activity but as a "outdoor classroom" particularly in the foundation stage. Whichever of the two sites chose – and the site of the Academy appears more logical – education from 3-16 combined – it will mean longer travelling distance for a great number of families on the Red House Estate than Witherwack. Is there any reason why a new school cannot be built on the extensive land around HRH Primary school? I am very concerned for the future employment of the experienced staff at HRH Nursery school when all three schools become one – and hopefully realistic guarantees of their employment will be given priority in the consultation process.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Willow Fields Community Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 8 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	2			
Headteacher				
Governor				
School Staff	2			
Resident	2			
Pupil				
Other	1		1	

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- If this goes ahead my son will actually be ready to start senior school. I still feel it is a terrible shame and future children will miss out of what has been a tremendous, environmentally friendly school already. Why on earth was the school given a lot of money to refurbish and extend when you had this in the pipeline which I'm sure has been for some time. Education is a top priority to me and I am afraid you are not going to get the good teaching in larger classes. I see Grange Park isn't on the list anymore – what gave you the quick decision about that school to keep it open? This is an old school, I went there I'm in my middle 40s. The school is remaining open I know that for a fact. Willow Fields is in ideal position to lead the children to their later years at the Academy. I am every disappointed and feel for the teachers who have been there 20 years or more.
- Waste of time having the consultation meetings – the council will do what they believe is best for our children. I agree that our children's education is of paramount importance – Willow Fields is not just about education. Its about community – this community will disappear wherever the new school is build. Redhouse Community Centre is the only community centre that doesn't allow children in – what sort of centre is that? All groups that are based there are for the elderly. I thought "community" included everyone. Rather than waste people's time with meetings it would have been more appropriate to send a letter out letting everyone know what you have already decided. Let's hope the panel decide to keep the excellent management and staff at Willow Fields. I know you're only interested in figures and money – if the staff from Redhouse take over, the level of education will drop – those figures will reflect on the school and the authority.

**Comments from Staff**

- Option 2 would probably be the best option for parents and staff. Having been through one amalgamation (Havelock & Pallion), I know the trauma of change has an effect on everyone. Nobody likes change. This needs to be a positive step with the emphasis on a new school and look to the future with as little negativity as possible (and job losses).
- If you close Willow Fields there is nothing left as a community on Witherwack and it will also affect the shops and no-one will want to live in Witherwack.

**Comments from Residents**

- We are concerned about the possible closure of Willow Fields Primary School. It seems a great deal of money has been wasted modernising the school only for it to be closed. They have an excellent headmaster who works hard for his staff and the children. The school is also a lifeline for the residents of Witherwack who meet up every week with friends for social activities. For some it is the only night of the week they go out and to lose the school would be a great loss as there is nowhere on the estate where people can meet up.
- Have had connection with the school since it was built. Now you are taking away our community "spirit". The only venue left to us on our estate where we can meet our friends and neighbours. If this has to be, then please leave us something to carry on our friendly group!

**Comments from Others**

- Willow Fields Primary school plays a huge part in the community of Witherwack estate. It has always included residents of all ages in its activities during the school year – Summer and Christmas

fairs, sports days, special assemblies, carol services, harvest festival and drama productions etc. Every year the school makes a point of inviting some of the estate's elderly residents to its Christmas lunch party. Does the other primary school do any of this for its community? Does its local community use the school as much as Willow Fields is used not only during the day but evenings and on a weekend too? Although a school is a place of learning it is, and should always be, part of the local community. Willow Fields is NOT ONLY part of the Witherwack community it is THE HEART of it. I hope that when the final decision is made on where the new school will be built the committee will take into account how convenient the position is not only the pupils and staff but also the local community and how it will benefit everyone affected.

- Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to feedback on the above subject matter. No doubt this is a stressful time for **all** involved in this process. As you maybe aware The Salvation Army are engaged along with a number of other 'Faith' groups in a number of schools across the City. We feel it only right to try and support local communities and schools where these necessary changes will have an impact. Please be assured we will try and support where possible in this time of change. Once again we offer our practical support to you and your team through these difficult times.



**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Bexhill Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 2 responses was received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	1	1		
Headteacher				
Governor				
School Staff				
Resident				
Pupil				
Other				

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- I think it will be unsettling for the staff at both schools. Who wants to be employed at a school scheduled for closure sometime in the future. There is no job security and personally I would be seeking employment elsewhere. This will be unsettling for the children if there is a high turn over of staff and as such affect their education. If there is going to be a new school the decision needs to be taken now as to when this is going to happen and give the staff the option of applying for jobs now so they can be as secure as possible in today's climate. It would also be interesting to find out if the staff at Bexhill will be given the same consideration as the staff of Town End given the recent appointment of the new head.
- As a parent in the local area I feel that I made a very difficult decision choosing my child's school. This was not easy due to the fact I had 3 schools to choose from and as a parent I wanted the best education for my children in a warm, caring, friendly but firm atmosphere and I got those feelings from Bexhill. I am now quite upset that after this hard choice it now seems my feelings don't mean anything as the school could be joined. As a parent I am not sure what impact this will have on my children not only educationally but on them emotionally. As I can see Bexhill nursery and school reach their capacity therefore I feel the need in the local area is to have the two individual schools. I feel the schools should be left to run how they currently do.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Town End Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

One response was received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer				
Headteacher				
Governor				
School Staff	1			
Resident				
Pupil				
Other				

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Staff**

- I am happy with the proposal in its entirety. I think it seems sensible to allow the federation to become established and use it to prepare for the amalgamation at some point in the future. A new school is an exciting prospect.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Bernard Gilpin Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 30 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	27 (1 form had no comments)			
Headteacher				
Governor	1			
School Staff				
Resident	1			
Pupil				
Other				1

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- I have a child in year 3 and I am most concerned at the timing of these proposals. I feel the children should be left as they are on both sites until this very large year is through. I don't believe receiving all the children from Gillas Lane will not impact on our resources and I don't think we should lose any. The council need to re-think the timing of this proposal and avoid bad feeling in both schools. The council also need to re-think their nursery provision or lack of it!
- I think both schools should be kept as they are at the present time as there is a risk of overcrowding the classrooms, and some children going unnoticed with certain areas or even some children's learning difficulties going undetected.
- I feel that the education of all pupils at both schools would suffer if combined into one site due to class room space/size also teacher to pupil ratio. Bernard Gilpin seems to be full to capacity at present – so where would another “school sized” group of children be accommodated? I feel class sizes are too large now – without squeezing in additional children.(x5)
- Am I right in thinking the additional classes will be housed in prefab classrooms? How quick is this merger going to take place.
- Don't agree with the amalgamation with Gillas Lane. Class sizes would potentially be too large with children's education suffering as a consequence.
- I feel the school has enough problems with numbers, staffing and coping with daily schooling with no sign of change. I feel adding more numbers is going to make matters worse. Against other schools after school clubs are limited, don't happen often and when they do they rely on non-school staff to assist. Numbers are limited due to this which again is going to get worse.
- I feel the school struggles to cope with the already high numbers and staff shortage. Staff have said they are unable to hear children read as they just don't have time, so parents are relied upon to help at home. To add more children to the school will not help. Breaks and lunchtime are understaffed to the amount of children in the school and often children are injured with other children helping the child to an adult to make them aware of the incident. Again more children more problems.
- I think it will affect Bernard Gilpin badly if they close Gillas Lane.
- Concerns regarding size and suitability of all aspects of the current building, play area and parking. We have 3 children that will be attending Bernard Gilpin during this transition and feel that it will be quite disrupting to their education. We chose BG based on its current intake levels/size and felt the amenities provided were good for the number of pupils, however do not feel that the larger numbers could be accommodated and provide a similar level of provision/service. We would like further information on the planned timescales and proposed developments as our children only get 1 chance at their education and we take it very seriously – this decision could/will affect their future. We have experienced amalgamations in the past and know how it can affect those concerned.
- My daughter is currently in year 3 at Bernard Gilpin. She is partially deaf and wears hearing aids. If the planned merger goes through I am very concerned as to what the size of the classes will be as the more children there are in the class, the less effective her transmitter system is as background noise has a huge effect on whether she hears the teacher clearly or not. I hope this merger, if it goes through will be planned carefully so as not to disrupt the children too much, or make the classes too crammed as this will have a massive effect on whether my daughter gets the best education she can possibly get.

- Whilst I understand the reasoning behind the proposal, I am concerned about the impact upon BG school. I am concerned that the pupil numbers will take each class up to capacity leaving very little scope to accommodate any additional demand. Year 3 is particularly over subscribed and I would request that no merger will take place until this year passes through the primary years. Even so, I would expect that parents of Gillas Lane school will move their children before the formal move, putting pressure upon this year group in particular. The car park is always full and the surrounding streets are congested already, and any additional demand for parking will create chaos during the school run.(x5) I walk my child to school and the pavements are also congested if someone stops it has a domino effect and children often stumble onto the road. If this is to go ahead,, there must be a commitment with appropriate investment, to improve the accommodation with in the school and the parking facilities and/or a scheme to reduce the congestion problem – staggered starting/finishing times, walking bus etc. Whilst the school was originally built to accommodate more children, the increase in car usage, more technology and equipment used in school etc determines that it is no longer big enough for such pupil numbers. I think it is asking too much of the children to be put into classes of such high numbers, with teachers who have to spread their attention so much more thinly.
- With the recently started regeneration in the area, what will happen when these communities develop and more children are living in the area, is BG big enough to cope with this? – two small community schools gives the children a sense of person and I strongly believe amalgamating both schools will strip this great value from BG school, something that the children, staff, parents and residents strive to continue to achieve. Why change something that works?
- I feel that to merge both primary schools would be wrong, as this may increase the size of the classes which the teachers have to control, meaning that not every child will receive the care and attention they deserve/need to ensure they receive the best start in their education. It will also put increased pressure on the teaching staff – again meaning the children will not receive the individual attention they need.
- My only concern is about the increases in class sizes as large classes do not work and the disruption it will cause.
- I feel BG should remain a separate school and not be amalgamated or any other changes in the near future. I believe this school is well run and effectively co-ordinates timetables of learning. My child transferred from another school, at the time lacking social, psychological and emotional stimulation. Due to being bullied physically and mentally, self-esteem and confidence were not apparent. After transferring she built up gradually her self esteem etc. this was due to support, encouragement and good management of all staff. I only hope if this school has to change in any way it preserves its good routines and reputations i.e continuation of behaviours etc.
- These proposals are purely for financial reasons. The education of the children is not top of the priority list. The school cannot cater for the additional increase in pupil numbers and to make the facilities suitable it will certainly cost a lot more than the additional cost of keeping the school as it is now. The proposal is not the best solution for the school, children and staff and alternative suggestions have been completely dismissed. Bad idea!!
- I strongly disagree with the decision to close Gillas Lane and send pupils to Bernard Gilpin. I think it will affect the teaching as well as the parking, which is bad enough now but with the extra pupils it will be even worse. I think BG should reduce the intake and send them to Gillas Lane.
- Merging the two schools will compromise the level of education the children will receive. There will be more children and some amount of teachers so children won't get as much help and teachers will be stretched to teach all pupils the same and give same help to each child individually.
- BG is a busy school now, where and how would place extra students without causing major disruptions to the current students? What about nursery placements? Will there be more competition for future places and will it affect school placements for younger children that will be attending these schools in the future. BG does not have the facilities to accommodate a kitchen for current students, so why do you think adding extra students is a good idea? Are there plans for new buildings, if so, where?
- My kids do not need over crowded classes. It's not fair on their education. The school isn't big enough to have Gillas Lane in.
- It would appear that parent's opinion count very little at the civic centre. I personally am very anti the closing of one school and amalgamating with another for a number of valid reasons:-
  - BG already has 2 classes of 25+ for most of the years – making classes/years have a larger in take will surely have some serious implications. As most of the classes at present have disruptive children (at least one) who blatantly distract children trying to work, are rude and aggressive and sometimes violent to staff and fellow pupils. Increasing class numbers will surely have a detrimental effect.
  - Personally, I feel the fewer pupils, ideally 20, the better the education – you only have to look at the private sector, to see the value and difference in learning! Every parent has a right that their child has access to the best education available and as far as I'm concerned – larger classes, new pupils, will have an effect on the standards of teaching. I'm just pleased that my child will soon be in year 6. Although I must point out that I am considering a move of school!
- We as parents of a child currently in year 3 are particularly concerned about the impact that this change may have on the quality of education for our child. Particular aspects include:-

- Extremely large number of pupils in that school year following merger
- Timing, relating to SATs (x2)
- Upheaval associated with building works which may be required (x2)

### **Comments from Residents**

- I feel that it would be detrimental to the children of Bernard Gilpin school to be combined with Gillas Lane. Classes will be larger and I feel the children will suffer both educationally, emotionally, I feel a smaller school is better. I also feel that the disruption to the children has not been considered. There will also be a lot of new houses due to be built in Hall Lane area in the future. Has this been considered as the numbers will increase in the area then making a larger intake to Bernard Gilpin on top of the merger.

### **Comments from Governors**

- I feel that this proposal has been forced upon us. None of the responses/ideas put forward at the last round of consultations have been looked at and implemented. The school is not physically large enough to cope with the increase in numbers in class sizes, hall (p.e./lunch) and parking facilities. More finance should be sought from central government to get over this blip and leave things as they are. The extra pupil numbers will put more and more strain onto the staff and make an already ever increasingly difficult job more so.

### **Pupil comments**

A meeting of the school council to discuss what it is that they like about Bernard Gilpin and what in their view makes it special was held. Pupils were open and confident in expressing their views and the following notes were taken of the council's views.

They talked about the subjects that they liked, the positive relationships in school and they appreciated the spaciousness of the school:

PE - dance

Literacy - story settings

science - get to do experiments

art

ICT

History and French

School is always safe - one of the safest places to be

Everyone feels safe

Everyone makes an effort to get on

Pupils spot others if they are hurt and help them

Maybe children in other schools don't get on as well as we do. Everyone makes an effort and tries to get on

School councillors can go to staff to put forward ideas

Not that much bullying anymore

People are not left on their own

Pupils co-operate more in the classroom - working in groups help us to learn and help us to make friends

Friends - people to play with when bored

I like the teachers because they help you make things.

Teachers help you to learn

I like the teachers because they help you make things

We have a real French teacher

Star of the Day

Tokens if nice to each other

Lots of rooms

Lots of space

The wild life area and the big field

### **Letters received**

#### **FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT HERON**

#### **Gillas Lane Primary and Bernard Gilpin Primary**

I would like to express my congratulations to all three educational establishments for the high standard of education and the first class pastoral care.

The catchment area for both schools has in recent years seen about 250 houses demolished and these are to be rebuilt in the coming years. This has had an effect in the number of pupils in the area for both schools. The closure of Gillas Lane would have an effect on nursery provision at

Houghton Children's Centre. The numbers of pre-school children at the centre are already at capacity. There is no scope for expansion and the entrance is simply a nightmare with the Children's Centre and the private nursery dropping children off at the same time.

Bernard Gilpin School was built 15 years ago and was built as an inclusion school. There would be extensive alterations to be made to the school. It has no kitchen facilities and the dining hall is too small for the extra number of children who will require lunchtime. Several extra classrooms and storage rooms would also be required. The internal works to the present classrooms would also be required as well as other concerns for the internal and external arrangements.

It should also be taken into consideration new schools have computer room and libraries built into them both schools have used surplus capacity for this purpose. Other uses for spare capacity could include Youth Centre or community facility.

I would also like to thank all of the parents and also everyone who has contributed to the process including the excellent web page.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Gillas Lane Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 216 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	41 (1 form had no comments)	6		1
Headteacher	1			
Governor	4			
School Staff	4	1		
Resident	61 (3 forms had no comments)			
Pupil	64			2 (X14 copy of letters sent to Echo)
Other	22 (1 form had no comments)			9

**Petitions**

A petition containing 1,602 signatures was received. The petition stated:

We, the undersigned, have NO CONFIDENCE in the consultation, option appraisal and decision making processes that led to the decision to close Gillas Lane Primary School through the school place planning exercise carried out by Children's Services.

Specifically, we would highlight the following:

- lack of obvious attention to the educational and emotional impact on pupils in the options appraisals
- Factual errors in minutes and reports to Cabinet
- Lack of comprehensive information on financial implications and alternative options in the options appraisal
- Lack of answers to relevant questions at consultation meetings
- Confusion regarding the alternatives for future nursery provision
- Lack of transparency and consistency in the decision making process
- Processes conflicting with several existing Sunderland City Council corporate strategies and policies and a lack of understanding by officers on their impact on the processes
- Lack of proper consideration of parents, carers and pupils views and suggestions

We therefore, request that this decision is NOT implemented, and that more research and consultation is carried out with a view to implementing Option 3 for both Gillas Lane and Bernard Gilpin schools

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from parents**

- Gillas Lane offers such a lot of things which a larger school cannot provide. The pastoral care of the pupils is second to none and offers some children the only stability they know. Nursery provision is paramount and the building of a new one when we have an excellent facility seems wasteful. Moving to a school which does not have a kitchen would only put pressure on to ship more meals in or are you going to build a kitchen as well.
- Why does the city council not just reduce the PAN?
- I chose Gillas Lane because of the closed classrooms and homely atmosphere. My son is at nursery here and has bonded with his friends and teachers. Having to leave this environment for an open plan school with larger classes will be detrimental.
- I think it would be best for the children to close Gillas Lane and put all the children in Bernard Gilpin for the following reasons:-
  - Gillas Lane is very old and in need of lots of repairs
  - Bernard Gilpin is a more modern building which will be better for the children to learn in

- There is not a lot of distance between the two schools so travel for the children is not really a problem
- The nursery at Gillas Lane is only open in the mornings. This is a waste of money. There is another nursery close by that has had lots of work done to it making it a safe place for the children. Why have two schools nearly side by side and both not full. Option 1 is best and will be more sensible to maintain Bernard Gilpin rather than pour money into Gillas Lane which is an old outdated school and should be closed.
- It is a disgrace and absolutely no surprise that the council want to close Gillas Lane. It is a lovely school and I cannot imagine that cramming 140 children into Bernard Gilpin will do anything to enhance my son's education. There will be too many children and I can only see a poor result for all children concerned, there is not even a kitchen, which Gillas Lane has. I feel our children will be sold down the river by a council which does not give a damn about our Childrens education. If I had known there was a possibility of closure (which was only officially released in the weeks after I had to apply for a school place) I would have made very different choices. I hope the Cabinet is proud of themselves for making the worst possible decision for the children of Houghton-le-Spring. The council has also removed any element of choice as I purposely chose Gillas Lane and not Bernard Gilpin due to the size and caring nature of Gillas Lane, also because of the attached nursery unit so my son could attend hopefully the same school during his primary education. I also feel that the council has merely gone through the motions by having these meetings and is only interested in saving money and at the same time seriously disadvantaging my son's education.
- I feel that this option is not beneficial to the children from either school. I have 3 children who attend Gillas Lane and they are very happy and settled. I fail to see how moving them to a larger school which is further away from home and without the teachers they have grown to trust, how will this benefit them at all?
- I'm not at all happy that the school is closing as I have 2 of my children waiting to start Gillas Lane. It is not fair as Gillas Lane is a friendly family unit. I think it should stay as it is. This will disrupt all children involved if anyone cares about these children they will leave the school alone and let it stay put.
- I think this is all very unfair on the children. My 4 year old is very confused and wakes up some mornings asking if she is going to Gillas Lane or Bernard Gilpin today? It's wrong!. She loved the nursery and has settled well into reception. She should be enjoying her start to school and not worrying about whether or not she is going to have to move! She has started wetting the bed – doctor says its nothing physical so it must be something worrying her. The only thing worrying her is changing schools. It concerns me that she is made to feel this way at such a young age and at such an early stage in her education! I hope you agree that this is all wrong and very unfair!
- My daughter is in her second year at Gillas Lane and looks forward to going to school. She has told me that she doesn't want to go to school anymore if she can't go to Gillas Lane. She has come a long way since she started here. The teachers spend time with her when she needs help, she doesn't have to wait for ages until the teacher has finished with another child. All this closing down of schools is wrong it seem to me its all about saving money. But how can you save money when you have to build more schools or add on to school to take children out of schools that you have closed down? I don't want my kids to go to another school to do work that they have done already as Bernard Gilpin are two years behind Gillas Lane. That's the trouble with the council, all they think about is money, and not about everyone's feelings and who they upset. This is all wrong – Keep Gillas Lane open.
- I find the proposal to close Gillas Lane unfair and unjustified. I feel that the options have not been researched enough and option 3 was discarded before a thorough report had been carried out. At the consultation meeting I felt questions were avoided and parents were fobbed off. There were many officers there but only one or two of them actually responded to the many questions that were asked. I am deeply concerned that we have nobody willing to answer our questions properly and with definite answers. The fact that the nursery provision has not been thought through properly yet but decisions have been made despite this, is extremely worrying to me. I don't think you are taking our Childrens education seriously, if you were you'd be helping us make option 3 work. I asked at the consultation meeting what the benefits would be if our school closed and my children had to go to Bernard Gilpin? The only answer Val Thompson came up with was that once they were at Bernard Gilpin they would finish their primary education there!! This answer was poor. I would like to see option 3 reconsidered and thought through with a more positive attitude, it can and will work. Please acknowledge my response (*email address provided - acknowledged 25/2/09*).
- Gillas Lane or Bernard Gilpin? Gillas Lane should be closed as there is no provision for disabled children. I think the council are meant to provide access for the disabled in all council buildings? Not the case at Gillas Lane school. Why have 2 schools close to each other and both half empty? Bernard Gilpin should be the school having money spent on it. The building is more modern, disabled access is better. Nursery and kitchens, is there a need for a nursery to be built on the Gilpin site when there are 2 nurseries around the corner. Kitchens could easily be built on, there is enough room. Gillas Lane is a tired old school needing a lot of cash injecting into it. Even then would it be up to standard and I don't think disabled access can be provided as its on different levels. Option 1 is the best solution.
- I believe that: The consultation process has been seriously flawed; The option appraisal process has been strewn with factual errors and not taken account of important educational factors; The decision making process is inconsistent and not transparent; and the handling of the process by the officers



has been ham-fisted, confusing and, in one case, inappropriate. I believe that the whole process is discredited and that any recommendations and decisions made as a result of it cannot stand the test of scrutiny and inspection. Gillas Lane Primary School should not be closed. The important and relevant views of parents and carers have been have been ignored and not given the attention they deserve.

- This option cannot be the best proposal for the children of either school, I have 3 children at Gillas Lane and they are all very settled and happy. Moving them to a larger school which is further away from their home and without the teachers that they have grown to trust has got to be detrimental to their education and certainly not beneficial.
- Is there any point in viewing or commenting on what is being proposed? I've been to both meetings with the councillor and yourselves and yes a lot of valid points were mentioned on both sides. I sat quietly listening to everyone's concerns that parents and the councillors had said, and the reaction from yourselves was enough. People are fighting to keep this school open, are they doing so in vain? I believe so. Your department is going through the motions, we are intelligent people and know that your department is going to close this school. I thought that our prime minister Gordon Brown said that every school had to have a full working kitchen and aren't all children the future. If so give the parents the right to choose between a large school and a smaller school.
- My views are to keep Gillas Lane open. Has anyone thought of the effects on the children i.e. mental and physical also emotional. Please somebody needs to take this into account.
- I sincerely hope that all the hard work and dedication the teachers, parents and parent/governors have shown in demonstrating their upset towards the planned closure of this school, has the desired affect of overturning this decision.
- These schools should not be combined. We have had children at both schools and now have a granddaughter there. Please don't take either away – they serve the community so well.
- In my opinion it would be better for all concerned if Gillas Lane was merged with Bernard Gilpin as it would mean the facilities would be better as Gillas Lane is an old school, and only has 1 class per year and not as modern as Bernard Gilpin.
- Gillas Lane is a good school. All the children are cared for and safe I would like you to reconsider and keep Gillas Lane School open. My children attend this school and are very happy. They don't want to move to another school. Save Gillas Lane Primary.
- If a thorough and fair review has been carried out and a decision has been taken to rationalise primary school provision with a view to provide more efficient, quality education for the children, at no detriment to their health, wellbeing or future success, then I support the decision to merge schools.
- I think this is a load of xxx, you have made the decision to close the school already. When new houses are built where are all the children going to go, Bernard Gilpin again! You are just trying to cut costs and not giving our children the education they deserve.
- I personally feel that the whole consultation process has been a total waste of time and money. Under no circumstances have parents feelings and comments been taken into consideration. The whole plan had already been decided beforehand and basically we stood no chance of keeping our valued school open although if you looked at the school alone it is ran considerably well, has a lot to offer both staff and pupils and is an asset to our local community. At first we were given three options to consider and I thought the first two were viable if looked at properly. I only thought and was lead to believe that option three was a last resort. This was not the case , the officers concerned just made us all think that. How can such a decision be made to close a school through these officers reports when they can't comment, give false and incorrect answers, only response given is "fill in the response forms". I'm sure you'll agree if you spoke to many parents there is a lot of ill feeling, utter disgrace and unhappy children. Our parent rights have been taken away and we are now been told what school to send our children to, sorry this is not acceptable. Also the year they propose is totally unacceptable as it's the largest no. of children. I really feel this needs to be looked at properly and decide on a more reasonable and appropriate year.
- I am very saddened to think of Gillas Lane closing and my child having to go to a different school. My children have really enjoyed attending this school and I have felt my children are safe, happy and well-educated here. I find all the teachers to be friendly and helpful and have nothing but praise for the school. I would love it if it could stay open and my youngest child continue their education there. (x2)
- I am a very angry and very concerned parent. I have two daughters that currently attend Gillas Lane Primary School. My eldest daughter will be in year 6 if the closure goes ahead in 2011. I attended the consultation meeting and by your figures this year will have 76 children. I was given no explanation as to how this year group could be split into classes (surely two classes of 38 children is unreasonable), it was also suggested that the children could be housed in a pre-fab, as a tax payer I don't think it is too much to expect my child to be educated within the main building. This is only one of many concerns I have. I am worried what effect the educational and emotional upheaval will have on my daughters SAT results. I am also aware that Bernard Gilpin school will be over-populated. As an expectant mother I am left wondering what extra nursery provision there will be. At the first meeting we were told there was to be a new nursery built at Bernard Gilpin site, then, at the second meeting we were told there was not going to be a nursery built. Will the closure go ahead without sufficient nursery provision in the area? How as a parent am I supposed to have confidence in Sunderland Council making the correct decision with regard to school place planning when the officers sent to discuss the plans don't seem to know what is happening themselves? The only

answer given to any of the questions asked at the last consultation meeting was “put it on your response form”. When will these questions be answered?

- As a parent of two children, one who has left Gillas Lane but attended from nursery to year 6 and one who is now in year 6, I feel very strongly about the possible closure of such an important school. This school has a lot to offer the children who will attend in the future and those attending now. Children at Gillas Lane are educated in smaller class sizes, which for many who need extra support, gives them an invaluable start to their education which would probably be not as consistent if the two schools were to merge. At the other end of the scale the high fliers are also supported and encouraged to go that much further. The children are educated in a safe, caring family environment and each pupil and parent are known by name by all staff which makes both feel as if they count! I am sure if it were not all down to purely finance this issue would never have seen light of day. When will council realise children’s welfare, education and future should not purely be down to saving money!
- I think it is very important to keep Gillas Lane School open as my child has developed extremely well since starting this school and I think it is vital that all children should have the kind of one on one time with their teachers and school teaching assistants which they get in Gillas Lane. I feel that if the school closed my children would not benefit going to a bigger school as this would disrupt their routine, confidence and I do not feel my children would the proper time with their teacher as there would be too many children in one class and one teaching assistant between 2 classes. I think you should also consider the children in the nursery as they would find moving very uncomfortable and could cause the child not to want to go to nursery at all. It is also important to consider the new houses that are going to be built which would be guaranteed to have more than 12 children living in them.
- At the moment we have two children attending Gillas Lane. Another two of our children have previously attended Gillas Lane and we have our youngest child’s name down to start nursery. From 1996 our children, for the majority of the time have happily attended the nursery and the primary school. The future looks bleak for not just our children, but many other parent’s children, as they will be uprooted from a school where they are settled to merge with another school, full of strangers, teachers and children!!! I think the school should stay exactly as it is. We as parents like to think it is a well run school, organised and has a friendly parent to teacher atmosphere, otherwise our children would not have attended Gillas Lane. I would love to think that my opinion will make a difference, but sadly I fear a negative outcome, even though there is a lot of hard work being done by not only teachers, but parents and relatives of children who attend this well balanced school.
- **LEAVE OUR SCHOOL OPEN – LISTEN FOR ONCE TO THE PEOPLE.** Having attended both meetings it seems pretty obvious the decision had already been made with only pound signs taken into account and no thought to the teachers or the pupils. Questions asked were never answered with satisfaction. Issues were avoided continually. I am not convinced these letters will even be read. Gillas Lane is a family school, the centre of the community where children feel safe and secure. I am speaking as a teacher who worked in the school, knew every child well enough to take them on three external visits (London and Paris). As one of the committee tried to point out she taught in a large school and knew every child by name, quite easy, but she would never be able to know what made each of those children “tick”. I feel Sunderland LEA are making decisions to suit themselves without a care for our children. It is such a pity Houghton-le-Spring was taken out of Durham Authority. As for forecasting the number of children in the future, this was ridiculed and rightly so. Bernard Gilpin is not big enough to facilitate all pupils – no nursery, no kitchen, open plan and prefabs are not satisfactory.
- I am writing as an angry father of two children attending Gillas Lane school. I am very concerned about the future of my children if the recommendation to close goes ahead. Have the councillors making the decision even considered the children in all of this? I attended the meeting and came out of it very angry that saving money means more to these people than our children do. This is obvious as when asked what positive benefits my children would get from all of this there was no answer!! This was the case for most questions asked. In fact the only answers I seem to remember being given to anything was “I don’t have the answer to that but you can write it on a response form”. There was a panel of other officers that sat and said absolutely nothing leaving Val Thompson to respond alone! (x3) This to me says that they knew what we as parents were saying all made sense and they had nothing to say that would justify their actions! We are all aware that a new development is planned for the estate opposite the school and although they say that they have taken this into account I fail to see how it is possible. How can anyone believe that there is expected only to be 12 children move into that area that could possibly choose our school? Would it not be better to leave our school as it is and wait to see if what they say is correct? After the houses are built and the families move in it will then be possible to have an actual number of children and not just a guess. The area that the houses are being built on is classed as a deprived area which are renowned for having larger families. There I think you may find that the number of children living there is more than even expected! I live on an estate of less than 100 houses, on an area that is not classed as deprived and we certainly have more than 12 children on our estate already, most of which attend Gillas Lane and babies whose parents wanted them to go there. What do they intend to do if this is the case? Bernard Gilpin will be full with no spaces left and children having to travel further with even more angry parents! The reason the parents of the children attending our school chose it is because it is such a small friendly school with smaller class sizes, allowing the children to have the attention they deserve from teachers who know them as individuals. The small groups

benefit the children who need the extra support (my own child being one of them) and it is worrying to think that our children will suffer through no fault of their own. I thought "EVERY CHILD MATTERED"!! What about the children who have only known a small school environment of 130 children who are being forced into a huge school of 422 children? The whole situation is going to be extremely detrimental to them and you know that is true!! I ask you please to forget the fact that you can use our school in this way to solve your problems and think more about the children. Leave their school open!

- I was unable to attend the consultation meeting but this doesn't mean I'm not concerned about the outcome of our school and the education of my 3 children. I live closer to Bernard Gilpin school but I chose to send my children to Gillas Lane because it is a small friendly school. I feel my choice as a parent has now been taken away from me. I know there were three options for our school, so I can't understand why it has to close. My children like their school and their teachers. I don't want them unsettled at all by the change.
- Disruptive learning in open classrooms – what is the research to prove children still achieve academically as if they were in closed classrooms. Increase in birth rate is factual; in an upper working class environment between 3 houses of professional workforce we have 7 children. I think the statistics of 1 child per 12 household is hard to believe! To extend Bernard Gilpin would mean reduced space for physical activity outside – we are trying to reduce obesity and encourage children to play outside when we are in a society of computer games etc. Therefore Gillas Lane has ample space for this so KEEP GILLAS LANE OPEN!
- How can this be the best option? Class sizes will double and our children will become sheep and not individuals. Your own numbers don't leave much to play with for families coming and going in our area which happens a lot. Fill up Bernard Gilpin at all costs seems to be the plan. One school for this whole side of Houghton. HA! Timing is going to be imperative, if this is to go ahead, 2011 is a joke, that class is the largest and to put them in temporary accommodation (supposed to be a long term solution) is ludicrous. Results will dip. Bernard Gilpin and the government are going to be impressed! Nursery – made a right mess of that, we need one, you need to deal with it. Small people are an asset not to be messed with. They are our future and need to be cared for not forgotten. Small is best – large is depressed. Keep Gillas Lane!!
- My children are thriving at this school, disruption is not good for them. A bigger school is not what I chose for my children so why should it be forced on us. Bernard Gilpin is a good school but very different to Gillas Lane. I want choice – Keep Gillas Lane open.
- I chose this school for a number of reasons:- it had a nursery which meant my children would already be familiar with the school and teaching before starting reception class.; it has excellent Ofsted reviews. Great reports and reviews; smaller school which obviously can only be of benefit to any child; its closer to my home; People I know had nothing but praise for the school and its staff. I am very concerned and angry at the proposal to close this school. I am fully aware that, although obviously not the favoured option among councillors, there are other ways of keeping our school open. Closing our school is the easier way for these people to reach their goal of reducing surplus places. (This response continued with a six page letter which reflected points already made by other parents in relation to the question of potential benefits of moving to Bernard Gilpin, staff knowing children and parents well, benefiting from working in small groups, querying predicted number of children from proposed housing development, large year group and suggestion of pre-fab accommodation, officers not responding fully to questions at consultation meeting, don't take parental choice away).
- I suggest that the decision to close the school has been made only on a financial basis. This leaves me somewhat confused as to how this decision coincides with the council "Every Child Matters" policy.? As a taxpayer, might I suggest a better financial saving would be made if the two schools were left as they are and then the council's officers would not have to be paid overtime to come to a meeting with none of the answers to any of the valid questions asked. Also in a council report I read recently it stated that Sunderland City Council aims to increase parental choice. Surely closing this school to create one large school is taking away parental choice completely given that there will be no small schools within walking distance to this area. As I am writing this response form I am wondering why I am bothering as none of the concerns or questions which arose from the first consultation meeting have been answered yet. It seems the financial decision has been made and the worry of how the children will react to the upheaval is left to the parents, teachers and school governors.
- Have you really thought about all the consequences of this closure, like where will the nursery children go in 2011. Your own numbers don't add up – teaching a class of 30+ children will be a nightmare. The government even says smaller is better, choice for parents! How does your proposals fit with government policy. So it will cost more to keep both schools functioning cost wasn't the issue. Both schools are happy with the way things are – leave us alone. I and others don't see temporary classes as a permanent solution and will probably look elsewhere. If you are determined to close our lovely, successful little school you had better make sure everything is sorted and ready before moving any of our children. I know my child for one will not handle this very well and everything must be done to minimise upheaval. What will happen with uniforms?
- Gillas Lane School is a credit to the community. It would be criminal if the school closed.
- I think Gillas Lane should stay open as it will result in over crowded class rooms at Bernard Gilpin, less quality time for one to one for pupils with the teacher,. It also be a factor for bullying. Then what if in September BG has taken all the children in they are allowed, where does the remaining

- children go. I think all local children should go to a local school, then would it not also be more expensive having to renovate BG to accommodate these extra children, Hall Lane or Racecourse Estate is a big area and all concerned would benefit from both schools been left as they are OPEN.
- As a parent of a child at this school I am deeply saddened by what is going to happen. I attended this school 30 years ago and it has been a lovely school and never had any problems. I would not be happy to let my child go to Bernard Gilpin as they are proposing. Gillas Lane teachers are first class and know each child individually and know all their backgrounds. If there is a problem it is easily sorted out. The school make their own dinners in the school kitchens where as Bernard Gilpin has theirs brought in. Please save this school.
  - I think you should leave the schools the way they are:- Gillas Lane is a nice little school and it would be a shame for it to close; the pupils get the help they need to achieve better; there is a nursery school so it saves time; the staff are happy and polite, they give you a nice warm welcome. So if Gillas Lane closes then we wont get what we want best for the children! So please leave everything the way it is for the children. Its all about the children and their welfare that's what matters more than anything else!
  - I am concerned that the officer's report to Cabinet is misleading and misses out information critical to the decision making process. For example:-
    - BG classrooms are smaller than if they were built today, on this basis surely its PAN should be reduced accordingly
    - Previous actions to reduce PAN at BG included converting classrooms into a library & ICT suite. These will be lost if the schools were merged.
    - Alternative uses do not mention Gillas Lane's need for a sick room and parent community room.
    - Cross cluster issues do not mention that BGs main road access has had speed humps installed. If the schools were to merge traffic would be increased. No mention is also made of the 111 homes planned by Gentoo.
    - Class sizes fails to mention that some year groups cannot fit into BG even after spending £750k. Portacabins may be required
    - Competition states 1 & 2 achieve the same end result, but if both schools closed and a true merge took place then all pupils would see some familiar faces and joint ownership of the school would be more likely.
    - Cost states a saving of £150k a year is to be made, but the plan runs for 5 years, therefore the saving are cancelled out by the £750k cost of implication. After the 5 years no data is available nor any school numbers flexibility. If numbers have gone up at this point then a new school will cost £5.75m.

All of the above points are within the officers notes or minutes of the meetings but do not deem mentioning to put a balanced argument over to the board. I believe if the board were aware of the above points along with many others – then option 3 would be chosen rather than option 1.

- My belief is that the process has started with much confusion for the children. Stages of transition will continue indefinitely only to the detriment of the children.
  - As stated, confusion to children now, some upset, unhappy & unsettled
  - Teachers losing jobs will need to seek permanent, safe employment. Who can blame them with mortgages etc to pay. Their careers need protection.
  - The actual change of school, probably very traumatic for some children and parents
  - Settling in for pupils for both schools and adapting to new environment, new teachers and new pupils
  - Well known fact that the performance of the receiving school will dip before any improvement made.
  - Where is the educational dimension to this? Gillas Lane is a successful school and deserves investment. It appears to be about your Cost Improvement Programme. Evident by the fact that Gillas Lane can resolve its PAN issue but there is no recognition that this can be achieved. What a coincidence that by closing Gillas Lane, your problem is solved – you meet your surplus capacity target for the city – you upset one set of parents and pupils – how easy is that!
  - Even Ed Balls has recently advocated more than one school in a locality to provide choice. Clearly this is being ignored and doesn't seem important to the council. Not all parents have transport therefore BG would be the only school for their children. Their choice is taken away.
  - Nursery provision – what a shambles! The goal posts change at each consultation. Get your act together and work as a team. Surely the process is discredited as parents etc were consulted thinking that a new nursery would be provided at Bernard Gilpin. Alternatives were also poorly researched. In my opinion the process is VOID. Nursery is integrated within the school making the transition easier for nursery children when starting school. Surely this makes sense. On a practical level – how do parents with children at nursery and primary school be in two places at one time.
  - Consultation – officers failed to engage the “hard to reach”. No flexibility on date and timing of meetings. Pupils have not “had their say”, however the school is supporting children to write letters to you. Lack of consistent and accurate information. Talked down by officers, at least two instances at 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb meeting where parents were belittled. Not true engagement and inclusion. Can I remind officers that they have a corporate policy on consultation.

- It appears that Sunderland City Council's corporate policies and strategies have not been complied with.
  - Community Consultation Strategy – “ensure that the results of consultation are fed into decision making processes and used to inform decisions” – no evidence of this.
  - Primary Strategy for Change ... increased flexibility to respond to parents choice, expanding popular successful schools... - the opposite – taking choice away.
  - Community Cohesion Strategy – “the support of young people in tackling deprivation” – as Gillas Lane is top third areas of deprivation you should be investing, developing and engaging the community. You want to take this resource away.
  - Community Empowerment Action Plan – “the giving of confidence, skills and power to communities to shape and influence what public bodies do for them or with and reach out to communities.”
  - Corporate Equality Scheme – you say you are committed to promoting equality and provide flexible services to meet the needs of local people – not really
  - Every Child Matters – Clearly this has been the basis on which you developed your Children and Young People's Plan. Gillas Lane pupils are “safe” and “happy” and “proud” to be at their school – so why take this away?
  - Quality Assessment Framework – Level A. For you to achieve excellence requires you to be flexible, responsive, able to adapt the service to best meet clients needs and demonstrates the achievement of shared outcomes as a result of effective partnership working. Standard 4 – to take full account of views, preferences and aspirations. I do not believe you adhere.
- School Place Planning for the Future – the future of who, certainly not the children. When I attended school in the 70's I was in a class of 30 pupils or more, we were constantly told that these classes were too big. Now my son is in a class of 25 which we are told is too small and two schools have to merge. Can you see the irony or not. We are also told that the area when regenerated will only produce an extra 12 children per 100 households. This statistic has been proven to be false within the coalfield areas. You propose that some kind of building programme will be undertaken at BG. Is this within the current school building programme ( 3 years behind and £10m over budget countryside) or is this an after thought after you realised that BG didn't have a nursery. This brings in the word planning. Your representatives at the meeting indicated that BG could lose their library and computer room in the short term. Great idea of how not to equip a school (future planning).
- I strongly believe that there is room for both smaller schools in our area. The closure of Gillas Lane would be emotionally upsetting for my kids.
- My son is in year 3. This year group will be the worst affected if this move take place in 2011, as this will be his final junior year. I feel this move will seriously affect his SATS as the upheaval of leaving one “closed” school situation and group to a larger class in possibly temporary accommodation will be detrimental.
- My views as a childminder who works mostly from Gillas Lane is that this lovely, warm and supportive school should not close. I believe the views of parents have not been considered at all. In the first set of consultation meetings many questions were asked and none were answered (class sizes, kitchens, staffing jobs, traffic etc) In this last meeting none of these were answered sufficiently. A worrying fact that I, a self-employed mother of 2, now has to contend with is that the closure of this school threatens my livelihood. I currently care for children whose parents have said would take the children from the area, will the council pay my bills when I lose work. Also I receive the majority of my business through nursery collections at the school. The proposal however is placing children in a setting with wrap around care. Please think of the wider effects that this school has within the community.
 

Because of national statistics and figures, you suggest disrupting the education of my children and the children in my care. In the consultation meetings our questions have not been answered, how can the council make an informed decision if you do not have the facts there. My daughter is in year 3, and you propose moving her, not only in a crucial stage in education but placing her in an oversized year group. How can the idea be justified, surely to even suggest this would at least make me think the children had been considered in this process, perhaps not. As a parent my choice was for my 2 children to receive education in a small school where they could develop self confidence because staff have the time to nurture each child. If my children are thrust into huge classes/year groups where are staff going to find the time to give each individual child what they need. Final words – Leave our school alone.

### Comments from Headteacher

- I am extremely saddened and disappointed that the proposal being put forward for Gillas Lane is option 1: that being to close Gillas Lane Primary school. In coming to this decision I feel that the LA has not given enough thought to the emotional and educational impact the closure of the school would have for the children and on the community.

Having only one large school is not always best in educational terms. Children would be going from a school of 136 in main school to one of 422. The knowledge staff have of the needs of its children and parents and the care and support they can be given in a small school could not be replicated as well in a large school. Furthermore, parents choice of schooling for their children would be taken away and this is against government policies.

I also feel that from the outset not enough consideration was given to the future nursery provision for our children as Gillas Lane has a nursery and Bernard Gilpin do not. The number of nursery children we have were never taken into account, nor were costings nor implications for overall nursery provision in the area. At this stage of the consultation parents are still unclear of what would happen to nursery provision and where nursery children would go. Nursery units and nursery schools have their own merits and distinctive features and parents at Gillas Lane have made a conscious decision that they want their child to go to a nursery unit attached to a school as they feel this is beneficial to their child. Under the proposal put forward again, it is not clear if parents would have this choice.

I also think that Option 3 was not given enough consideration and even at this late stage would urge the LA to reconsider this option; that being, to reduce the schools PAN and remodel our existing space. Whilst we do feel this is a challenge this could, as previously said, be an exciting opportunity. Remodelling the existing space could provide spare capacity and room. At present the LA is looking at locality based working for its services and there may be an opportunity to have LA services within our school. The LA needs to at least give this consideration. Spare capacity could also be used to enrich the curriculum for our pupils e.g. provide ICT suite, nurture room etc, or to provide a community room for our parents.

The support from the community to keep Gillas Lane open has been overwhelming. While understanding the need to reduce surplus places I would urge the LA, before making a final decision to look carefully at all responses and to reconsider whether Option 3 is at all possible.

### Comments from Residents

- I don't think the school should close, I worked there for years and the children loved it.(x2)
- Will be sorry to see such a good school under threat of closure.
- As a registered childminder I will lose children and also if I will be taking children to nursery I could have to travel as far as Hetton and I don't drive. This will be a major problem. I also have a daughter who works at the school and she will have to leave her job which she loves.
- A small school like Gillas Lane is one in a million – it should be saved not shut down.
- As well as the educational and emotional changes involved in the closure and not forgetting disruption, job losses etc, I would like to bring to your attention the safety factor. Both of my children went to Bernard Gilpin school and in all of those years there was never a school traffic warden appointed to cover Hall Lane. If Gillas Lane primary was to close the extra volume of pupils will result in traffic chaos on the surrounding roads which in my opinion will result in another child being killed along this road, especially without a warden. BG has severe car parking problems as it is without the added burden of even more cars. Some parents have been known to park dangerously within the car park or on the main road so imagine the danger extra cars would contribute to this. Another factor involved is the start of new housing development about to be built opposite Bernard Gilpin. This will result in heavy works traffic too! Before you decide on the closure of this school – ask yourselves this –
  - Is a school traffic warden going to be appointed to Hall Lane?
  - Can you assure the parents that their children will be safe?
  - Are you going to provide extra car parking at BG?
  - Have you monitored the volume of traffic that enters BG at present at peak times? Have you predicted what the impact would be with added traffic?
  - Have you thought about the new housing development and the amount of wagons and work vehicles that will be using this road?

The safety of our children is paramount and I strongly believe the closure of Gillas Lane Primary School will severely compromise safety as well as all other factors involved both emotionally and educationally.

- Why is education going backwards? In other areas where schools have been closed, suddenly there is not enough places. Statistics are all very well, but in the real world it doesn't compute. In this area the nearest school is not big enough, it never will be. There is no kitchen. I thought healthy eating in schools was the in thing. As for 12 children per 100 houses, why don't you come and physically count the houses with children especially the little ones who are coming up to nursery age. By the way where will they go? I am so disappointed that the policy of small classrooms is going to be a thing of the past. Education which means teaching is taking back seat and the slower child will be left further behind, just like when I was at school 48 to a class. I would ask you to rethink and think of the children.
- In my opinion Option 1 is the best solution. Gillas Lane school has stood here since the 1960's and is now looking shabby. To me it has very little done to the building and only now are the management of the school starting to carry out works. This is a bit stupid wasting money on a building which should be closed and make way for new developments in the area. All of the children could then be moved to Bernard Gilpin which is a more modern building and I would say a better learning environment than Gillas Lane.
- I believe the closure of this wonderful small school would be of no benefit to anyone other than the local education figures. Without looking at the educational and emotional effects on the children, as

Im sure you haven't. What will happen with the empty building? A large building standing dormant will surely encourage anti-social behaviour in an area where the elderly live safely and comfortably at the moment. If the building is demolished the area will be left yet again open to youths and unruly behaviour. If you look at the open land on Queensway you will find anytime teens and young adults drinking, smoking and gathering together. This behaviour is intimidating enough without supplying them with areas closer to their homes where they can gather. (x5) Looking at the reports you are basing your decision on, I can see no facts on what the future holds for the area, yet council are expected to make a decision.

- It will be detrimental to close Gillas Lane school. Parents will have further to go. This is a close community. Does this mean the nursery will close as well? That will be a big miss.(x2)
- The council houses adjoining Hall Lane that have been demolished will no doubt eventually have replacement properties with young families and young children. There will be a greater need for school education, therefore it is essential that schools are retained to officer sufficient places for education when this occurs. To disrupt children's education in mid-stream is also detrimental to their well being. I would like to see Gillas Lane remain open.
- All our grandchildren have attended this school and all have had a satisfactory education to start their life. We hope that the response to our plea is that the school will remain open for the long future ahead.
- Gillas Lane has given 100% to the education of children in their catchment area – including our 2 who are now in their 30's! To close this school will cause heartache to the children in the "crucial ages", when they should be in a stable environment and not transferring mid-stream to a new school which will have added responsibilities i.e. larger classes, more parking etc.
- I gather that this school is in danger of closing. The school would be a great loss to local children but we as residents look on it as one of the good points of our neighbourhood. It's a joy to see the children and their parents and I must add that we have never had a bit of bother concerning behaviour or traffic. It is not an old school as we can remember it being built plus it has an excellent playing field. It would be a sin to close it.
- I would like to see this school stay open because we have a child coming up school age and it would be better for her to go to Gillas Lane than anywhere else.
- Ideally for the sake of our community and children's welfare, SCC would keep our small schools open, to provide a caring personal setting for our children. When class sizes fall below 15 for 4 years running, we could consider closing. Even then consideration should be made into new estates or an ageing population which could be replaced by young families. What I cannot understand is why both Gillas Lane and Eppleton are to be closed. This leaves no choice but Bernard Gilpin. If this happens I shall have to move from the area before my toddlers reach school age. I would rather move than send my children to Bernard Gilpin. I have visited the school and found that the children have a lack of respect and have not bonded as a peer group. I believe this stems from school care and guidance and reflects a failure of the school. Soon to get worse when Gillas Lane children attend the school, as Hall Lane estate children need care and attention to raise their academic standards and improve their prospects in life. Raise care standards at BG before considering closure of such a lovely school where community, care and standards are high.
- Gillas Lane is a nice little school. BG has no kitchen facilities or nursery. Over the last few years the council have knocked down a lot of houses with many more earmarked to be pulled down. What will happen when the council rebuild will BG be able to accommodate as I understand it cannot yet take all the children from GL. Without the nursery where do our pre-school children learn to play and ease into school life. BG may have room to expand but with open classrooms there's no "privacy" Expanding costs money – HANDS OFF GILLAS LANE.
- My daughter attended this school several years ago, she is now an adult with a young daughter of her own. This school helped my daughter and she was a very happy child and was very happy at this school. I therefore feel it will be a shame if the school closes as it is part of the community.
- I feel the school is needed as it has served the local community so well and should continue to do so.(x3)
- As a resident living close to the school, I feel it would be a tragedy if it were to close down. The school is the centre of this community. Most of the people living here have gone through the school and they are all a credit to the staff who work there. If the school were to close, the heart would go out of the community.
- BG would need to be adapted i.e. not big enough, no kitchen etc. This money would be better spent keeping Gillas Lane open.
- As a local resident I feel that Gillas Lane provides an example of a school concerned with the overall development of the children for whom it cares. As well as academic development the staff at the school show concern for the emotional and social development and support children on those aspects. I write with some degree of professional judgement as I am a retired Deputy Headteacher from within the authority, and I have had some practical experience at working at Gillas Lane in the time since my retirement. Should the decision be made to close Gillas Lane it will only be to the detriment of the children in this community.
- Children's welfare should be top priority not money. I think it will be best for the children to stay at Gillas Lane.
- Why are you proposing to close Gillas Lane School? Children as young as these, should be near their homes if possible for the sake of safety. What harm is it doing where it is? The children are in

walking distance for parents to meet them. I also feel children are happier in a smaller school, there is more contact with teachers and other staff. The closure is not a good idea for either parents or children.

- I live next to the school and if this school is closed down and houses built on the land (from good authority) where will the children from these houses be educated? It seems to me that money is the issue here (from whom to whom). Myself and my wife would like to object most strongly on this.
- The community would suffer from the loss of such a good and local school, who's teachers and staff made such a nice impact upon our daughter. She was well prepared for her next stage of education which I personally doubt she would have been given elsewhere.
- Absolutely a ridiculous idea. I believe small schools are more friendly and personal. What about the journey the poor children will have to put up with to go to another school, not to mention the stress and upheaval for them and parents. Who said big is better? Stick to the small schools. This is the children's future we are talking about. How would closing the school improve a child's education?
- As a qualified teacher, (and I have had 5 children of my own, some of whom attended Gillas Lane school) I know that smaller classes deliver better education to our kids – a matter of ratio – each child receiving more one-to-one attention. The Government are always vowing to provide higher quality education – this is the solution. It works! Look at the private sector. It is past time for rhetoric DO IT! Another proof is smaller rural schools – where they have been allowed to survive – better quality service. Big is anything but beautiful. If we keep provision as it is – payback will be reaped in a short time in the form of improved performance and good quality learning. It is time they put our money where their mouth is!
- When we first moved to Houghton our children were forced to move from the now demolished Houghton Junior School due to bullying. Our last child attended Gillas Lane which provided a wonderful foundation as now she is a very bright young lady. We are very grateful to the staff of Gillas Lane and believe it should remain open as a proven provider of quality education and a choice in local schools must be provided in case of problems.
- I feel that the proposals to close local schools is driven by finance and not the well being or requirements of the children in the area. There have been some outstanding results in terms of Childrens education, which should be the main driver, from our local smaller schools. Closure of any of these would put education standards at a very high risk.
- Having two schools in the area is a good thing as this way parents have a choice and the children get to have smaller schools with smaller classes. That can only benefit them surely! I give my full support to saving this school and I only hope the people making the final decision listen to what is said about this wonderful school and use another solution to solve their problems. There are ways of achieving their goal without upsetting so many children as after all they have to be the most important people to think about!!.
- I am a concerned member of the community and a future parent. I have been told that there will be no nursery built at the BG site. This is causing some concern as I am unable to drive further afield.
- Keep it open!(x4)
- My children enjoyed being at this school. The staff were always very nice and the children all seemed happy. It would be a sad day if this school was to be closed.
- Listen to the people and keep this school open – money should not be the decider but the children's needs and that of the community who live and breathe round it.
- My concern for the proposed closure is the nursery provision at Bernard Gilpin. Places are not available there at present. Where will the nursery children go? And how can the proposed school be able to take in the extra children. Prefab units are like taking a step backwards instead of thinking of the needs of the children.
- This is an excellent primary school with very high standards. The children get the best attention from staff. The school has a beautiful nursery attached to it and is in a prime spot. The move will disrupt children from both schools and leave and beautiful building standing empty ready for vandals to move in. Staff will be made redundant and BG will be overcrowded. The number of children dwindled when the houses were pulled but these are to be rebuilt bringing more children into the area. There are babies and young children living in the Croft Lea and Warden Grove estates – these children will be wanting to go to Gillas Lane. Both schools should remain as they are. Gillas Lane is a school worth saving.
- I think it would benefit the residents of Houghton to keep Gillas Lane Primary. Surely it would be better to have 2 smaller schools than one large one. Children would have the benefit of being taught in smaller numbers in the class room and would have more attention spent on them. Save the school for the children and the future of their education and so on.
- Good schools should always be supported – not closed. Government targets are not conducive to successful primary education. Children are our future, small schools give better education. Children are our future. Small schools give better education. What are the Government thinking about closing this school!
- Good school has served us well in the past. As we now have no children of school age, but support others around us who do (x2)
- I am a retired primary school teacher and have experienced a similar situation. Personally I don't think the children are fully considered. The authority in my opinion has decided and that is that. All down to economics. Having taught for thirty five years, in a small school then amalgamated, small is best. The bigger the school the bigger the problems. It is so important that primary children have a



safe and comfortable environment. There are more issues which I am sure will have been brought up at meetings.

- I am in favour of keeping Gillas Lane open. I think that moving pupils to BG will mean quite an increase in class sizes also in the number of cars travelling along and parking on Hall Lane. I believe teachers need fewer pupils per class rather than more to maintain control and concentration levels and there is already a movement and parking problem with traffic entering and leaving the Gilpin school.
- I live in Houghton and have two small children, both of whom I intended to send to Gillas Lane. I was very disappointed to hear of the council's plans. Gillas Lane and Bernard Gilpin are my only two choices and after looking into both we decided that Gillas Lane was the better of the two – better Ofsted, better results and is a lovely respectable small school which was recommended by a lot of people in the area who can't speak highly enough of its superb staff! I don't drive so can't travel so that leaves me with no choice other than to put them in a huge school with over 400 children in it. This is ridiculous. How can anyone believe this to be a good idea?? How can this benefit any child at all?? I believe this to be an easy option for councillors. I wanted my children to attend Gillas Lane nursery and follow through to the school which is a great idea! I worry for my children's early years education. Please leave Gillas Lane open!!!!
- I think you should re-open the Glebe. It never did me any harm, Bernard Gilpin is xxx and I love Gillas Lane. I went there as well. I'm a good boy now. I am 45.
- I am strongly opposed to the closure of this school. Its an excellent asset for our children and I believe its closure would be detrimental to my children's education.
- I am shocked that this is even an option. This school is a part of the community on the Racecourse estate and has been for a great number of years. I am a member of the Board of Directors at the local Community Access Point and as such am very active within the community and have always found the school a vital partnership in the work we do and we will be devastated to lose it for the children on the estate. It is my opinion that the powers that be should have a very serious re-think about this regarding the provision of education in the Coalfields area. I feel that the opinions of the entire community should be upheld in this course of action and not even time has been given for residents to fight this proposed closure.
- Too many schools are being closed for no reason at all.
- Rumours abound as to why a school so vital to the local community is scheduled for closure. The most talked about is that the land on which it stands is required in order to build houses – fact or fiction. Has anyone of intelligence and ability to cope with information put thought into this matter. I think not. A complete enigma.

### Comments from Governors

- If you close Gillas Lane you will make life very hard for lots of people i.e. staff will lose their jobs, children will suffer disruption and feel unsettled, parents & carers will have much further to walk, staff at Bernard Gilpin will feel very stressed. I know you've heard this all before but Gillas Lane is a great school providing excellent educational standards. Surely this should be taken into account! The nursery provision has not been looked at properly, surely a decision can't be made when all options have not been investigated thoroughly. Bernard Gilpin already has trouble with traffic at school times, parents at BG already call it dangerous. If Gillas Lane did close the traffic at Bernard Gilpin would increase significantly! Parents will have no choice as to where they want their children to attend school. Closing Gillas Lane takes away parental choice and this is not acceptable!
- Money would be wasted improving facilities at Bernard Gilpin to cope with extra children. That money would be better spent keeping Gillas Lane open. Closing Gillas Lane and various others will take away parents right to freely choose which school to send their children to as this will fill all empty places, with the movement of children from schools closed. Bernard Gilpin has no nursery when Government say nursery education is so important. What alarms me is the huge number of meals that will have to be transported to school as Bernard Gilpin has no kitchen. This cannot be safe or healthy to keep such meals warm for so long. Open plan school classrooms are very disruptive and with the increase of number of children noise level must be unacceptable.
- I am a parent governor at Gillas Lane School. During my term as governor and my time here as a parent, I have found this school to be extremely well managed by our headteacher and her team. As a parent governor I also have the extra benefits of knowing all the parents who have nothing but praise for our school and its staff. I believe the decision to close this school has not been thought through in any great detail. EVERYONE involved in this decision and EVERYONE if affects knows that there were other options which did not result in the closure of a superb, happy, family school. The nursery situation was definitely not given the thought it needed and even now the future of nurseries in our area is not known. We know we can adapt our school and put in place any change needed to keep our school open. I have every faith in our headteacher and our team of governors and I know that any changes made would be done professionally. The dedicated staff would in turn ensure minimal upset or confusion to children. Any changes to a child's life could be confusing for them but far better to leave them in their safe, secure, stable school environment with their own teachers that they know, respect and TRUST!! Again I feel this needs further thought and discussion and I feel strongly that the children themselves need to be given more consideration as after all "EVERY CHILD MATTERS"!!!

- Feel very strongly that this is not a consultation, we have no alternatives to consult on. The school is a good school as agreed by Ofsted. The local community feel strongly, look at the website and media feedback. The entire process is a disgrace.
  - Gillas Lane was given a “good” rating by Ofsted – Bernard Gilpin wasn’t
  - No kitchen facilities at Bernard Gilpin
  - No nursery and we were lied to/misled at the first meeting
  - Class size of 76 is unacceptable
  - Ed Balls school minister said as recently as last week that parents should have a choice
  - How are the children’s interests best served.

### Comments from others

- As a childminder I have been in contact with the school for 12 years now. The children that have attended the school have had great opportunities. The school has a warm and friendly welcoming atmosphere. It would be a shame for this school to close, as would any school in Houghton.
- Oppose the decision to close.
- Why even consider for closure? I believe it is time the Local Authorities got their act together and tell us the real reason the school is earmarked for closure. It certainly has nothing whatsoever to do with the welfare of the children’s education – that’s for sure.
  - It doesn’t take a genius to work out why the numbers have decreased. Sunderland Council has demolished more properties on the nearby Racecourse Estate – and failed to rebuild, that obviously the school pupil numbers have gone down. Should this be at the expense of our local school education system? Not really!
  - I believe it is the financial problems of Sunderland Council that has created this situation and nothing more.
  - “The school has good capacity to build further on its current success” – “Achievement is Good” – “Excellent” – “ Outstanding” – “Gillas Lane is a good school – you are right to feel proud of it” – “Leadership and Management are good” – “The impressive rapport between pupils and staff is at the heart of school life and underpins its success” – extracts from Ofsted report Nov 08. Does this sound like a candidate for closure?
  - Now why not come clean and tell all concerned that it’s solely to do with money and without consequence to the children’s education – the parents – or indeed the excellence of the Headteacher, her staff and indeed all who have wholeheartedly contributed to the success of Gillas Lane primary.
  - I have no disrespect whatsoever to BG school, but the intended closure of Gillas Lane is the main issue and could prove to be detrimental rather than beneficial to these settled, happy children who are comfortable in the excellent environment in which they are continually proving to thrive.
  - Come on think again – does this school really need to close? In my opinion a totally unfair, unjust proposal and in need of further review before the final decision is reached.
- I agree that closing Gillas Lane school would upset the children who would have to be transferred to a new school with new teachers and children they do not know. The children will get more attention in a smaller class number rather than overcrowding classrooms. Also parents who have to walk to school may have a much longer journey, which is difficult for the younger/nursery children after a day at school.
- I am strongly against closure of Gillas Lane school and nursery. It is a lovely school – well structured, has its own kitchen and plenty of play area. I was a dinner nanny there for 12 years until my retirement and will be so sad to see it close.
- I think it is really terrible if they close the school, whatever happened to the children’s education being very important. I don’t think they have even been thought of in this matter. This closure needs to be looked into.
- There is room for 2 schools in the area. BG and GL are very different. GL is a small school which has a great family feel, every teacher knows each child’s name and background which is a definite positive for the children and parents. BG is also a good school but on a larger scale. I disagree on changing either of them! Keep them both open.
- If they build on Hall Lane Estate, where will the children go?
- I oppose the closure of Gillas Lane school. It has recently been announced that 100 new home development will be built in the area of the Racecourse estate. This being the case then the school should remain open to care for the needs of present and future pupils from the new housing being proposed. It seems nonsensical to close a well performing school when all the data shows that local schools and facilities are of a great benefit to the development of children. Closure of this school would mean children moving school and being integrated to larger class sizes which is not to the best development of children. Please review and reverse your decision.
- So the council plan to make great changes in the education system. NO – they plan to make great financial changes to the detriment of the schools and the pupils involved. What advantages come with the closure of a small, closely knit, good performance school and merging it with one whose performance rating is lower and whose building is totally inadequate. This only serves to enlarge classes thus making it more difficult for teaching staff. I will also mean that more pupils will be “left behind” as they struggle to keep up with those who are more capable. It is obvious from attending the meeting that those involved in making the decision to close Gillas Lane School do not have any contact with the school, its staff, pupils and their families and, quite frankly, give the impression that

they don't care. Surely if financial cuts are necessary there must be other ways of doing it. Please think again.

- I feel closing the school will be detrimental to the education of the children. To move the children, especially those in Foundation, I believe would be extremely upsetting for them. The children are accustomed to small class sizes and benefit from a low pupil to teacher ratio. Their education will surely suffer if the school is to close and the children join a bigger class.
- Small schools are proven to benefit children at primary level. The more such schools available, the better are the chances of establishing literacy and numeracy skills early in the schooling of all children not just those who live in "good" areas.
- I oppose the closure of the school particularly in light of future demographic trends which will result in an increase in the number of nursery and primary school children requiring school places. The proposals of transferring Gillas Lane primary and nursery school children to BG will result in huge class sizes. This will mean that class sizes will exceed the government's recommendations for class sizes. Both local and national labour parties state education is a high priority. The closure of Gillas Lane School does not meet their pledges. Also how will these proposals meet the guarantee of providing nursery school places for all 3 year olds and above. I intend to write to my MP. I find this whole situation a disgrace.
- Following my attendance at a school closure consultation meeting at Gillas Lane Primary on 23 Feb, I am compelled once again to express my growing concerns regarding the future education of the Gillas Lane children, who I feel are not being considered by the council in this matter. After the council representatives were introduced I was astounded by the apparent lack of participation of all but one of these officers, in accounting for the decision to close the school, by not answering or querying any of the questions posed by the parents. I feel that their silence was due to the fact they do not really believe that the option they are promoting, which is to close the school, is the most constructive option for the children. Surely SCC officers cannot really believe, or expect us to believe, that merging pupils to form a larger school with overcrowded classrooms, will be of any benefit to the children and their education what so ever. This is an easy option to alleviate a strain on their current financial educational budget and not a long term beneficial educational option. Much was made of the fact that many homes had been demolished, leaving Gillas Lane school short numbered but future development projections and foreseeable community expansion was skimmed over with unrealistic national statistics quoted for this geographical area. It was also assessed, that due to the unrealistic timescale, it will inevitably include forcing some children into temporary accommodation while they enlarge the BG site or build another school to cater for the inevitable overcrowding.

Apart from taking children away from their friends and from a school where they receive excellent tuition, the outstanding teaching of our children with additional needs at the school was highlighted by many parents throughout the meeting and indeed throughout the whole consultation period, but I have yet to hear or see any consideration or mention of this topic in the council report. In my opinion, this appears to be lack of consideration for this cohort of children leading to the obvious prevention of them reaching their full educational potential. Education departments claim to be "reducing inequalities and promoting equal opportunities for children", but at no time during the consultation period do they seem to have considered how the proposals would affect children with additional needs and mild disabilities.

It also came across that there is now no other option than closure and that there is no more time to explore other avenues, apart from closure.

By closing this school, the council will be taking the heart out of Gillas Lane community where the destruction of this community has been going on quietly for many years and will continue until pretty soon there will be nothing left. How much does the LA actually Houghton-le-Spring as being part of Sunderland? It is much easier to make desperate financial changes to the far reaches of the city, where public outcry is dampened by distance and many of the final decision makers have never even been to, and probably never will.

I feel a reconsideration of other options for this wonderful school is paramount to the future educational welfare of the current and future children living within the Gillas Lane community and a just and appropriate outcome for the combined efforts of the teaching staff and parents alike.

- The school is at the centre of an already decimated community and I feel that closing it would only add to the erosion. I have read the Ofsted reports for both schools involved, and feel that the better of the two is the one chosen to close. Have the "powers that be" considered the children in their plans? Children need stability to mature and grow both physically and intellectually. Uprooting them means that they have to take precious time to resettle. It is a fact that children respond better to smaller classes which enables the teachers to spend more time with each child. It is obvious that the plans are based on finance and not what is best for the children, their families and the community. It is obvious from the comments posted on the website that even the staff oppose the merger. These children are our future and should be given the best opportunities possible. I feel that the proposed merger is not the way to ensure this.
- I consider closing this primary school a mistake, as the education the children receive appears to be of the highest standard. My niece and nephew have gained a lot from the smaller class size of the school rather than having a larger class size meaning they are getting more attention towards educational needs. So children's education has to suffer for financial savings and cutbacks. Also I can't understand how you can justify closing this primary school regarding financial savings considering the smaller classroom sizes are meeting with children's educational needs and if the

school was to close the other options would result in having larger class room sizes. So you would be closing a school with good Ofsted inspection reports, low class room numbers at the heart of a close knit community for financial gain!

- I am a concerned Grandparent. My main concern is that my eldest granddaughter will be moved to Bernard Gilpin in her final year of primary school. I am also aware that this year group will be over capacity by 16 pupils. Surely the council officers are not suggesting that this as well as the upheaval and unfamiliarity would benefit these children especially in their final SAT year. At Gillas Lane she is a member of various before and after school clubs. I am proud that she is so keen to take part in these activities which means she is often at school from 8.00am. and encourages her to lead a much healthier lifestyle. Would BG be able to offer children these activities? What benefit is there to move children from a good performance school to one where some children will be housed in pre-fab classrooms and there will be no nursery provision. I understand there is a new housing estate intended for the area, wouldn't it be better for both schools to delay the decision until development is complete and the actual increased number of children is known. The expected 12 children per 100 family homes is unrealistic in a deprived area, as deprived estates and renowned for larger families.(x2)
- Committee members got children or grandchildren or any kind of related children attending so these decisions affect who just a minority? Kitchen, nursery, class size, regeneration – would appreciate reply on above points as your representatives could not supply answers.
- I am appalled at the prospect of Gillas Lane closing. I worked there for 30 years and have first hand knowledge of the level of commitment of all members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to all pupils. Each child was given the utmost support and knowledge to obtain their full potential – academically, socially and morally. The nursery unit is second to none and in the position it is in caters for some of the more vulnerable young children in this area.
- It would be a shame to see the children attend another school.

### Comments from staff

- This decision does not take into account the needs of the children. Filling B.G school now does not take into account the re development of the area. Where will future children go? the children at both schools will find it difficult to adjust to a school of over 400 when they are only used to smaller numbers. This includes time on the yard and dinner times. Smaller numbers are surely better. Other schools in Sunderland with more surplus places have had their pan reduced. We should have that option as well.
- Closing Gillas Lane is the worst thing for our community that the council can do. Keep Gillas Lane open, reduce the PAN, wait until the area is rebuilt and people are returning to this area to raise a family then see that we do need 2 primary schools in the area. Trying to teach 30 pupils in a class when some have special needs and social and behaviour problems is surely going to reduce the outcome of children's education and surely this should be a priority. Gillas Lane has just had a fantastic Ofsted report does this not count for anything!!!
- This proposal should not go ahead. It has no advantages for the pupils and staff of either school. Closing Gillas Lane will mean the loss of a good school, children having to move to larger classes and parents having further to take their children to school, as well as the inevitable job losses. BG will need remodelling of site, larger class sizes which will lead to possible management problems for staff not only in class but also supervision at lunchtime. Nursery provision will also be massively affected if closure goes ahead. The wider community would also be affected by increasing traffic levels to the BG site. The only consideration that has been made is one of finance. No-one seems to have taken the views of staff or parents on the consultation into consideration. The children are our priority – it's a pity the council do not feel the same.
- I have been a member of staff for 10 years, and in this time I have seen standards of education and achievement rise year on year, as a result of the hard work and dedication of the team – this includes EVERY member of staff and the children. The children are rewarding and well-behaved, mainly due to the fact that they feel they are part of a family, with family values and high expectations. We know each child and their needs, and so are able to tailor their learning individually. The staff are a close-knit team, and work tirelessly to improve practice, standards and the learning experience for all children. As music co-ordinator I am constantly complimented on the behaviour, dedication and standards of our young musicians and I know that our aesthetic education is excellent. We believe EVERY CHILD MATTERS – does our school place planning team agree?
- As a former pupil, a parent and currently a member of teaching staff, I am appalled at the decision to close Gillas Lane school. The school has for many years been a focal point in the community and a "haven" for many of our children. We live in an environment of high unemployment and deprivation and yet Gillas Lane manages to provide the children in this area with a warm, loving and stimulating environment. Anyone who had attended our Evening of Arts & Culture would have been amazed at the talent shown by our children, the number of proud parents and friends who attended and the fact that former pupils were so eager to support the school with this event. This typified what this small, community school is all about – a place where children achieve well and where their achievements are celebrated. Please consider the impact this decision will have on children whose lives are enriched by this school.

- I feel that all the options have not been looked at properly. This school is a lovely, friendly extension of the family. We have a nursery on site and a kitchen where meals are cooked on site. It would be a great shame to the community if it were to close.
- Money appeared to be the main issue. It didn't look as if anyone had thought of the children's welfare. Initially a nursery was going to be built on BG site, next meeting a nursery might be built, changing goal posts all the time.

### Comments from Pupils

- X 20 response forms consisted of drawings/posters to save Gillas Lane.
- X 24 response forms had letters written on them asking the council not to close the school.
- I like my school very much.
- I don't want to go to BG because – people live far away, in a small school you get more help, this is a kind school, my sister might get scared, they don't have a nursery, they don't have a kitchen.
- Gillas Lane is amazing. It is small and cosy. The activities are interesting and fun. I am part of the school council and we help make decisions. We decided about red nose day. We raised two hundred pounds considering we are such a small school, I think we did a good job. I don't want my brothers and sister to be taught in a hut. The teachers always help and comfort us. Teachers give us challenges and the support we need and when we need it. You can talk to the lunchtime staff.
- I like my school because the dinners are scrumptious.(x2)
- I do not want to go to another school because I do not want to leave the teachers and we have grown up in this school. I love this school because the dinners are fresh and fantastic. I do not want to go in a big class. (x4)
- I like this school because I will miss the teachers if we go to a different school and I can walk to school from my home.(x5)
- I like this school because I will miss my teacher and all the teachers. The teachers look after us and keep us safe.
- I don't want to leave this school because I like the teachers and I don't want to leave.
- I like the dinner ladies at dinner time.(x2)

Fourteen pupils also sent copies of letters they had written to the Sunderland Echo expressing their opposition to the proposal

Reception and Year 1 pupils wrote the following letters saying what they like best about their school.

The things we like best about our school

By Reception

We like going down on the bottom yard to play foo ball.

We like playing in the water at our Nursery.

We like going in the sand outdoors at Nursery

We love our teachers.

We like playing with our friends outside.

We love to bake cakes in our kitchen.

We love our hot school dinners.

We like to walk to school with our friends.

Jessica

MORRIS

SNOWY

HOWDY

LEAFARON

DAVID

CLAYTON

MICHAEL

SAM

Malcolm

AMY

ALEX

LEVI

DYLAN

CRIG

DANIEL

EMILY

Comments

We are the children of Year 1 at Gillas Lane Primary School we are 5 and 6 years old.

We know our school is special and these are the things we like about it.

We like our literacy and numeracy lessons and all of the hard work we do.

We like being outside because we have very big school grounds.

We like our classrooms because there is lots of room to move around and we have space to do our Art, Design and Technology lessons.

We like our school dinners because they are healthy.

We have lovely teachers and every teacher knows our name.

We have lots of friends who go to our school and we can play with them outside of school.

Lots of the children in Year 1 live next to Gillas Lane School and we can walk to school and walk home again.

We have a lovely library in our school and lots of computers to help us.

Most of us have been in Gillas Lane School since we were in nursery and we love it.

Jessie  
Jacob

Ellie  
Mackenzie

Owlson  
Elise  
Anthony  
Rebecca

Bethany  
Aisha

Chantelle  
Abbi  
Thomas  
Jamie

Henry

Emma

Daniel

B. Appleby

## **Other letters received**

**FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT HERON**

### **Gillas Lane Primary and Bernard Gilpin Primary**

I would like to express my congratulations to all three educational establishments for the high standard of education and the first class pastoral care.

The catchment area for both schools has in recent years seen about 250 houses demolished and these are to be rebuilt in the coming years. This has had an effect in the number of pupils in the area for both schools. The closure of Gillas Lane would have an effect on nursery provision at Houghton Children's Centre. The numbers of pre-school children at the centre are already at capacity. There is no scope for expansion and the entrance is simply a nightmare with the Children's Centre and the private nursery dropping children off at the same time.

Bernard Gilpin School was built 15 years ago and was built as an inclusion school. There would be extensive alterations to be made to the school. It has no kitchen facilities and the dining hall is too small for the extra number of children who will require lunchtime. Several extra classrooms and storage rooms would also be required. The internal works to the present classrooms would also be required as well as other concerns for the internal and external arrangements.

It should also be taken into consideration new schools have computer room and libraries built into them both schools have used surplus capacity for this purpose. Other uses for spare capacity could include Youth Centre or community facility.

I would also like to thank all of the parents and also everyone who has contributed to the process including the excellent web page.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

I am writing to you in my capacity of Chair of GLASS (Gillas Lane Action to Support School), an action group devoted to overturning the proposal to close Gillas Lane Primary School.

As you are no doubt aware, 4 individual formal complaints from parents and carers have been submitted to the Council through the Council's published system for dealing with complaints. These relate to the school place planning exercise carried out by Children's Services, in particular the consultation process, the option appraisal process and the decision making process. The fourth complaint relates to the conduct of officers at the consultation meetings in October 2008 and February 2009.

We are aware that Cabinet, at a recent meeting, has already chosen Option 1 (Closure of Gillas Lane) from the option appraisal process to implement. I am seeking confirmation from you that any decision will not be implemented until these complaints have been fully investigated and resolved. As a local authority that has recently retained its 4 stars, we anticipate that these matters will be dealt with fairly and impartially.

We believe that the whole process has been badly flawed and not in compliance with many of the Council's own corporate strategies, policies and procedures. The needs and wishes of the pupils, parents and carers of Gillas Lane pupils have not been considered. These serious concerns and some of the arguments for keeping Gillas Lane Primary School open are described on the website [www.savegillaslaneschool.info](http://www.savegillaslaneschool.info). Please look at the site for more information.

I look forward to your response.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

I, like many other parents and carers at Gillas Lane Primary School, would like to MAKE AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT about the option appraisal process adopted as part of the Children's Services school place planning exercise.

I, like many others, feel the option appraisal:



- omitted, in large part, any consideration of the educational and emotional impact on pupils.
- used unrealistic population projections in relation to future house building in the area – this is a big area of uncertainty in view of the credit crunch and projection of house building rates over the next 5-10 years.
- put too much emphasis on cost and financial saving factors.
- gave very little exploration of alternatives in terms of other use of buildings.
- had errors of fact in some of the option appraisals.
- displayed confusion over future nursery provision.
- lacked a robust financial assessment of the comparative costs of various options.
- was not comprehensive nor sufficient to make an informed decision.

This has left me, and many others, feeling that the option appraisals had been poorly prepared and selective in their use of information. This has led to the wrong decision being made and will affect my children.

The decision to close Gillas Lane Primary School should be overturned as the option appraisal process is not thorough, has major omissions and significant errors. This, added to the flawed consultation and the less than transparent decision making process, has led to a course of action that cannot be sustained.

In the future, design an option appraisal process, in consultation with the users and other stakeholders, that has relevant factors to compare options with appropriate weighting of those factors so that everyone is clear about how decisions can be made. Make sure information is sufficient and timely to inform the process. Officers do not have the monopoly of knowledge. Bring the users and stakeholders along with you rather than preaching at them.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

I, like many other parents and carers at Gillas Lane Primary School, would like to **MAKE AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT** about the conduct and the performance of officers of Children's Services during the consultation meetings in October 2008 and February 2009.

I, like many others, felt that officers:

- displayed a lack of knowledge in the face of relevant questions from parents and carers. The response was "put it on a response form" despite the plethora of senior Children's Services staff on show at the front of the hall
- displayed a lack of knowledge of the council's corporate strategies and policies when challenged
- displayed confusion on the future nursery provision
- displayed an inflexible attitude to questioning during the second meeting. Officers were informed during the 23 February meeting of a comment by a member of the City Council Cabinet during a recent meeting that we, the parents/carers, would be able to put our views on all options at the forthcoming consultation meeting. Clearly this message did not get to the officers running the consultation meeting
- inappropriately commented on their preferred option at the October 2008 consultation meeting stating that their preferred option would be closure of Gillas Lane.

This has left me, and many others, feeling exasperated, angry, that the whole thing was a fait accompli and that our attendance was a waste of time.

### **Remedy**

In the future, provide training for staff on the corporate policies and strategies so that they can incorporate them appropriately in to their own projects. Better design and preparation for consultation events generally. Let's have some joined up thinking and joined up action.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

I, like many other parents and carers of pupils at Gillas Lane Primary School, would like to **MAKE AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT** about the decision making process that led to the decision to close Gillas Lane School and move its pupils to Bernard Gilpin School.

I, like many others, feel the decision making process:

- lacked any consideration and understanding of the educational and emotional impact on pupils
- was not transparent, it was not clear how the decision was arrived at
- appeared to ignore the views and suggestions of parents and carers or give them very little weight
- was not consistent. In another area of the City Council, the apparent preferred option was put aside in favour of a more pragmatic approach to an uncertain future – see Grange Park option appraisal and proposal
- appeared to target Gillas Lane as an easy option for closure that would then help other struggling schools through the distribution of the recurrent savings made as a result of its closure
- used financial considerations and not the often quoted reduction of surplus places as the main motivation for the decision. Gillas Lane can meet its surplus place reduction requirements with some remodelling as showing in the option appraisal
- appeared to be a vehicle for confirming a decision that had already been taken.

This left me, and many others, feeling that the wrong decision had been made based on selective information and fearing that our input was a sham when a decision appeared already to have been made.

The decision to close Gillas Lane Primary School should be overturned as the decision making process is based on incomplete option appraisals and flawed consultation. This has led to a course of action that cannot be sustained. In this particular case, I don't believe that a strong enough case has been made for closure and that Option 3 is the best and most pragmatic in view of the medium term uncertainty surrounding house building and the population projections in the Gillas Lane/Bernard Gilpin area.

In the future, explain how a decision is to be made up front, what are the important factors and explain why a decision is made after it has been made to be clear and transparent. Better still, come to an agreement with all users and stakeholders beforehand on these matters.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

With reference to the above, I would like to express my support for Gillas Lane Primary School in its fight to remain open and also express my gratitude for the many benefits my family has enjoyed by being a part of this excellent school. I now have two Grandchildren who currently attend the school and my family have been a part of Gillas Lane School for many years.

My Grandson, who has a moderate learning and physical disability, is only progressing well due to the high quality of care and tuition he is presently receiving from attending a small well managed and resourced school, where every child receives their entitlement of tuition based at a level that caters for their own individual needs. It is not so very long ago that children with minor learning or physical disabilities, would have had to attend a 'Special School' that catered for children with much greater disabilities. It has since been proven that this cohort of children should not be segregated from their non-disabled peers. The result of a closure of Gillas Lane Primary School will result in taking my Grandson and other children with similar problems, out of an environment that is known to them, one which they feel safe and one in which they can learn and compete with their peers. Moving to a new environment with new teachers, larger classrooms and a different schedule and curriculum could destroy much of the excellent work already carried out and have a marked consequence in their learning for years to come.

The teachers at Gillas Lane School care about their students, the administrative staff are very hands on and involved and many of the parents, including my daughter, who is also a school governor, work incessantly at the school or for the school to make it the truly warm, friendly and professional learning environment that it is.

I have been involved in the educational system for many years and know that this is one of those places that works and gets results. I know that the children from the Gillas Lane area benefit greatly from the high dedication of the staff with additional and enthusiastic assistance by parents who choose to give of their time to keep the school on the right track.

Parents and indeed the children themselves should be allowed to have a voice with the right to be supported fully by any hierarchical system in what they believe is right for the future welfare of the children in their community.

My concerns also focus on the need to look ahead and have regard to projections of future demand for school places. I would ask you to exercise care when doing so, given that this can never be an exact science. Firstly, population projections for a given community or area can fluctuate quite significantly from year to year. Although there may not always be agreement as to the demographic figures, it is very important to look clearly at the population projections relevant to considerations of any school closure proposal.

Also, I feel that the way in which financial considerations and implications are calculated and set out needs to be more absolutely clear to all parties concerned. There may also be real and contentious implications for the local community served by the school, which should be the focus of many of the consultation responses. It is important that proper consideration to all such relevant matters prior to reaching their final decisions is given in full, although the welfare and educational interests of all of the pupils has to be the key consideration.

I hope the answers resulting from the consultation process, in which the points and issues raised are answered, are accessible and offered in full, having been taken seriously and explored fully. In any process where transparency and accountability count for so much it is essential that everyone who has participated in the process get some sort of response or reply beyond just the announcement of a final decision.

Let me conclude by asking you to fully reconsider all aspects of this issue and fully explore all options presented before making any final decisions regarding the Gillas Lane school closure. I hope the decision makers keep in mind that the pupils of Gillas Lane Primary, however young, are every bit as much as staff and parents, key stakeholders in any potential changes to school provision. I suggest that we put them at the forefront of our thinking when considering any alterations to the pattern of educational provision in this community.

The keeping open of Gillas Lane Primary school should be predominant and not the opposite.

### **Gillas Lane Primary**

I refer to the above matter and write to express my grave concerns regarding the same. The school, as it stands at present, is the heart of the community in the area it is situated. A closure would have a dire effect upon the whole community, which, in my view, is being slowly eroded by beurocratic decisions made outside of the area by people who appear to have no real and genuine community interest in the area or in the children.

The proposed closure has been and remains vehemently opposed by a great number of the community including, but not exclusively, parents and families of the children, who will lose a much loved and valuable asset to the educational establishment in the local area. This was evident by the overwhelming show of interest at the recent meeting held at the school on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009. During the said meeting a lot of extremely relevant points were raised, including one particular pertinent question "*Please give us one positive for the children currently attending the school*". This was met with silence! Neither myself, any of the other local people or indeed the panel present at the meeting can see any clear positive advantage for the children of the school through the mists of "financial savings and cut backs".

I respectfully submit that the most important reasons for the school remaining open are being overlooked by policy and decision makers. It is my contention that the level of education both to children who manage their educational needs and to those who require extra assistance will drastically reduce as a result of a number of factors, most of all larger class numbers (resulting in more pupils per teacher), open plan building layout etc. etc. At present, the class numbers are easily and well managed by the teaching staff at the school with the children receiving the assistance and level of teaching they require regardless of their learning ability. A move to Bernard Gilpin would clearly jeopardise this educational management and therefore reduce the level of education attained by the attending children. Primary schools are an important stepping stone, not only within the educational sphere but also to prepare the children for later life. An efficient and effective primary school education goes a long way in shaping the individual child, who will hopefully mature into an upstanding and law abiding member of society.

In the current climate, I feel that it is hugely important to INVEST in education, not to cut back. I would argue that a great deal of the sociological problems faced within the community, especially relating to anti social behaviour involving young people stem from a lack of support, interest or engagement at an educational level. The school is achieving extremely well and routinely produces good results. One only needs to consider the very recent (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> November 2008) Ofsted inspection reports prepared pursuant to section 5 of the Education Act 2005 regarding the two schools (link to Gillas Lane Ofsted report document) (link to Bernard Gilpin Ofsted report document).

Within the preambles and introductions it is clearly stated:-

(Gillas Lane Primary School)

*“The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are **above average**”.*

Surely this alone must have a far reaching effect on the potential catastrophic decision of merging a school of this nature with a school [Bernard Gilpin] described as follows:

*“The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly speech and/or communication problems, is **above average** for the size of the school”.*

Merging two schools with above average levels of children with learning difficulties will, I respectfully submit, dilute the levels of attention and specific teaching they receive at present as the pupils could fade into the larger class sizes and important learning difficulties could be missed or overlooked. The table below at appendix 1 shows the grades attained by each school following their respective inspections, these inspections being carried out recently, within a short time frame of each other and more importantly within the consultation period for closure.

The report [re Gillas Lane] shows that this school attained a **Grade 2 (GOOD)** in overall effectiveness whereas Bernard Gilpin attained a **Grade 3 (SATISFACTORY)**, this clearly being a lower grade to Gillas Lane. Why close an overall more effective school over a less effective school? This cannot be in consideration of the best interests of the children, which one would argue remains paramount, and in fact a duty to not only the Local Authority but to the community as a whole.

When considering and comparing the two reports it is a clear and common thread that Gillas Lane School is a better achiever with more “good” grades attained than “satisfactory”. Again, the table shown below outlines, within the guidelines of core competencies, the grades attained by each school. This is a point I have laboured slightly but one which is an extremely important factor. As a tax payer, I whole heartedly agreed that financial analysis is important and money needs to be saved wherever possible. Consideration of the table below is, in my view clear evidence of the high level of achievements of Gillas Lane Primary School. I am more than happy to pay towards the upkeep and running of a school of this nature, which shows a consistent and thorough approach to the education of its pupils.

The table clearly shows that the proposed school to close was assessed in all but one of the categories as “Good” whereas the proposed school with which it will merge attained only two “Good” grades, with the remainder being “Satisfactory”. Surely these inspections are carried out for a very valid reason and the results of the same are an important factor to be considered prior to any decisions being made. I would therefore contend that the situation as a whole has not been fully considered and that further consideration is required in relation to this aspect alone.

It is reported that a statistical analysis has been considered regarding the recent demolished Holly Avenue, Windsor Crescent etc. The statistics reported are at best unrepresentative of the actual situation. The area cannot remain undeveloped and at some stage building is to commence to provide more affordable / housing association housing. With this will inevitably come larger numbers of children than expected. To close Gillas Lane School at this stage and without a clear view or forecast as to the number of families to be housed would be commercially unsafe. As families return to the area any local feeder school will undoubtedly become overcrowded or school lists will be closed, again having an adverse effect upon the community as families need to travel farther afield for education. To close Gillas Lane Primary at this stage will be a loss of an extremely valuable resource.

In essence, I feel that the situation as a whole has not been fully considered and this was clear throughout the recent meeting. The position needs to be considered more carefully with more deliberation and consultation over the wider and more diverse catastrophic sociological effect closure of this school could have as well as the BEST INTERESTS and WELFARE of the children involved. They are now pawns in a financial strategy but valuable and respected members of a community, which is already being slowly dissolved. Their needs and requirements need to be raised within the “list” of objectives and outcomes in this particular consultation as I feel that these considerations rank some way down the list and certainly below less important considerations.

I wholly support the retention of the school and am aware that my feelings are mirrored by the majority of the local community who are passionate about and very much want what is best for the children at the school. I trust that my concerns and observations will be given due consideration within this consultation, the outcome of which will have a profound effect upon not only the pupils but also the wider community as a whole.

### Appendix 1

	<b>Gillas Lane Grade Attained</b>	<b>Bernard Gilpin Grade Attained</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness of the school</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	Satisfactory (3)	Good (2)
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Personal development and well-being</b>	Good (2)	Good (2)
<b>Quality of provision Teaching and learning</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Curriculum and other activities</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Care, guidance and support</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Hetton Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 47 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	26			
Headteacher	1			
Governor				
School Staff	6 (2 are also Governors)			
Resident	3			
Pupil				7
Other	3			1

In addition to the above responses, a form was submitted jointly from the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery with the following comments:-

As a collective response we feel that the following points need further consideration:-

- Consultation process – this has been inconsistent and as a community we feel that we have not been listened to.
- Strength of feeling against the proposal – the volume of petitions signed need to be taken into account.
- Impact on community – a full and thorough understanding and analysis needs to be undertaken.

We formally object to the proposal and strongly feel that if it proceeds, it will be to the detriment of the Hetton Community and their families.

There were also 7 letters from pupils sent to the Leader of the Council expressing concerns over the proposals.

**Petitions**

A joint petition for Hetton Primary, Hetton Nursery and Eppleton Primary schools was received. The petition includes 2,674 signatures and states:

These petitions are presented on behalf of Hetton le Hole Nursery School, Hetton primary School, Eppleton Primary School and the Community of Hetton who are opposed to the proposal to replace the existing three schools with a single school.

They ask the Council to intervene and stop the proposal that will involve the closure of highly successful schools that serve their distinct communities extremely well. The petitions are presented to demonstrate the strength of feeling from the Community of Hetton against the proposal and the detrimental impact that closure would have.

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- There is no need for any other potential sites to be considered, there is an outstanding school already available providing excellent teaching and facilities for my child and the rest of the children who attend. This school provides everything a child, parent and family could ever wish for and is excellent value for money. A school on another site would mean unnecessary travelling for my son, maybe even by bus, which I feel very uncertain about, and could lead to many safety issues. Why does this disruption and disturbance have to go ahead the perfect solution is to build a nursery onto our fabulous school and then we have nursery-primary-secondary all on one site – how beneficial, worthwhile, welcoming and homely for our children. At the end of the day our children are the most important people in all of this and I ask myself are you taking them into consideration!!
- The closure of the school would be devastating to all – teachers, parents and most importantly the children at the school. I feel the opening of a bigger school would also cause very big problems and obstacles for the children who are now very aware and used to a smaller capacity of pupils and set up. As a larger one would only add further problems for the children. Everything would change so the same level of care and education cannot be the same. Each child's education is equally important, so leave Hetton Primary as it is.

- What happened to freedom of choice – I chose this school because it has small teaching classes.(x2) She has come on excellent!. This response continued with 5 pages of text which the respondent summarised as follows:- Leave us alone because 1. Regent St/Caroline St – big traffic problems,(x2) 2. I want my child taught in small class, 3. Don't leave our community with nothing (no village hall and now no school if you have your way) 4. Two different communities.
- I am disgusted at the proposal to close Hetton Primary School. I oppose your proposal to amalgamate Hetton Primary School, Eppleton Primary School and Hetton-le-Hole Nursery. Hetton as a community do not want this to go ahead. All 3 schools have told you they don't want this to go ahead. Please listen to us! I suggest you reduce the PAN size at Hetton Lyons for the next few years which will free up teaching space. (x2) This will also allow Hetton and Eppleton Primary to address the surplus places they have by taking in the children who have not been accepted by Hetton Lyons School. This response comprised of a further 3.5 pages of text which covered the following:-.... The sites are not suitable and are not in the middle of both schools. Respondent asked for a detailed explanation as to why the Highfield model had been chosen and how the council planned to provide for under 3s in the Hetton Community. Respondent expressed concern over education standards if experienced staff were lost and asked for the recent Ofsted inspection results showing that Hetton Primary was of a high standard be noted. The respondent also asked for a detailed explanation of the appeals process..... Again I want to stress that I am aware Hetton Primary has surplus places. I expect you to provide advice on alternative options and give realistic explanations and help to our school on how we can address the surplus places other than by the proposed amalgamation.
- In the consultation meetings, staff, governors, parents and carers have all strongly opposed this proposal. Why have our views and opinions not been taken into consideration? Where does consultation come into this? This is very much a dictatorship,(x2) you knew all along the consultation process what you wanted and so far everything we as the community of Hetton has suggested has been completely ignored.
  - Absolutely no-one in Hetton wants this. Please be aware that we will continue to fight this every step of the way.
  - At the moment Hetton Lyons is full and children of all ages are being taught in pre-fabs! In the consultation meetings we were told only older children were only affected. Which is not truthful as I know 6 year olds are in prefabs because their parents have confirmed this. (x2)
  - Where is parental choice?
  - We were told that the new school that we don't want will be based on the Highfield model, this will be wrap around education with 1 headteacher to cover both primary and nursery provision. This again is unacceptable as why should the children at Hetton Lyons have a far superior education with one headteacher for the nursery and another for the primary? Education experts have advised this system offers the best in educational provision for children. Imagine my surprise when at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12 March when planning officers present denied all knowledge of the Highfield Model being proposed for Hetton! It is no wonder we have absolutely no confidence in the planning officers! (x2)
  - The proposed sites – Community Centre, prone to flooding and is earmarked to be used as a youth centre. Site two is contaminated with salt and cannot be used, which leave site three which is two miles away from the Moorsley community. This is too far to walk with young children.(x3)
  - I think it is very apparent that we have not been given answers by the planning officers. Believe me all of these questions have been raised in the consultation meetings. The consultation has definitely broken down as far as the Hetton cluster goes.
  - We are not prepared to gamble with our children's education and future. Our children are our precious gifts, I know as far as planning officers are concerned, they are drains on finance. Do not spend my hard earned tax on an ill-thought out , white elephant of a school that is neither wanted, practical or fit for purpose.
- The consultation process has been unfair. The timescales too short to make responses. Parents have just received the minutes today (17 March). It has taken council officers 18 days to type up and publish these minutes, 2 days to respond, previous minutes have been inaccurate.
  - The proposal to build one new school is against the views of the parents and residents of the Hetton and Eppleton area, where both schools are at the heart of their individual communities.
  - I am against creating a Federation of Governors for the proposed new school as I feel this is not what the people of Hetton feel is best for the community and we have a petition of over 2200 names to support this.
  - The three proposed sites for a new build may be of equilateral distance between Hetton Nursery and Eppleton but not for the children in the Moorsley (Hetton Primary Catchment area) The sites proposed have poor accessibility for vehicles and major child/road safety issues. Distance to sites from Moorsley is too far for parent/child to walk.
  - I strongly recommend the council look at the feasibility of building the new school on the Hetton School site, there is plenty of land. Children from Eppleton area come to this site

at secondary age, there is good links and transition with the senior school, have all age groups as separate schools but on the same site which is and can be used by the community for extended hours access, family, community learning, easy access.

- I do not agree with the closure of a nursery school to create a foundation stage unit within a primary school to address surplus places.
- I know it is the duty of the council to address surplus places and we at Hetton Primary are willing to work with the Authority to regenerate the Hetton area but we feel the people/parents of Hetton are not being listened to. We have given alternative options. We have stood in Hetton and asked residents of their views on the proposals. We feel we need more information. The officers need to carry out feasibility studies on the Hetton School site. As well as the proposed sites then the Hetton community can realistically choose the best area for the future education of our children if that is the only option we have as "Every Child Matters" in our community.
- I chose Hetton Primary as it provides small class groups, excellent education, outstanding care of my child and offers good value for money as does the other schools in this consultation process. "Big is not always best". I feel option 1 to reduce PAN at both schools would have suited the community better. The children at Hetton Primary are already taught in mixed classes, it would provide job security for staff at both schools. The children could continue their excellent education within their own community instead of reducing parental choice. I urge the Cabinet to reconsider this option. After all we are the people who live here and only want what we feel best for our children.
- As a parent of two children who will be immediately affected by this, one of whom requires special attention because of development needs, I am absolutely horrified at this whole proposal including the area marked for the new site. Hetton Primary should not close as it is the heart of the community and the best school I have come across giving my children fantastic educational progress. The proposed new site is totally inappropriate in my opinion due to its appalling location and distance. This needs to be reviewed URGENTLY and I ask all concerned to take a walk with the parents to realise how inappropriate this really is. To end, why are there children being turned away from Hetton Lyons when they have siblings at the school. They are "over subscribed". Please explain – why not send them to Hetton Primary???
- I would like the school to stay at this site as I chose this school as the classes are a lot smaller. Therefore I think my son benefits from this.
- You have lied to us throughout this consultation process! You told us that only the older age groups at Hetton Lyons are currently in demountables. This is not the case. I have 2 friends who both have children at Hetton Lyons in year 1. Both of them are taught in demountables. This begs the question... have you deliberately deceived us? Or is the research you have done incorrect.
  - I would like to you to consider reducing the PAN for the next 2 to 3 years to a 1 form entry at Hetton Lyons. This would allow Hetton Primary and Eppleton Primary to take in the children who did not get into Hetton Lyons.
  - As discussed during the consultation meeting we plan to fight your proposal. However I am fully aware that there are surplus places and they need to be addressed. Let us as a community work with you to address the surplus places. There are other options we could consider and discuss with you. Many of these were discussed at the last consultation meeting yet you have chosen to ignore the very relevant comments and views given to you. Why are you not listening to the community when we say "We do not want a new school".
  - I am very concerned as a parent. You have not given enough information for me to make an informed decision. Where will the new school be? You can not tell us! How big will it be? You can not tell us. What will happen to the current excellent teaching staff during the extremely long time before the much opposed school is built? You tell us it will be challenging times – you are not kidding!
  - I suspect the teachers we currently have will leave in order to take up a more secure position. That will leave us with teaching positions to fill. I suspect the new staff we manage to secure will not have the expertise or knowledge that our current staff have. If my child's education and social and emotional development is affected I will be contacting the necessary bodies/agencies concerned and I will be taking this up with the LEA.
  - The 3 proposed sites are a considerable distance away from Hetton Primary and my home. I would like Cabinet to be informed of the exact distance from Hetton Primary to the proposed new sites so they can make an informed decision.
  - I feel as if you have not made the reasons for the final proposals transparent. I feel as though this proposal was on the table before the consultation process began. The reason for this is that no one (parents/carers/staff/governors) said a single school was a good idea or what we wanted yet you have still come up with this proposal.



- Finally I would like to stress that we are aware there are surplus places. Please look at your proposal again. Work with us as a community and help us address surplus places in a way that suits all of the community of Hetton.
- I am not prepared to walk to Easington Lane and have already been turned down for Hetton Lyons in March 09 as there are no places. Keep our school open.
- I am concerned for the emotional well-being of my children if the school is closed. I object to these proposals and wish Cabinet see sense and keep the school where it is.
- All three schools offer individual excellence that would not be able to be replicated in the building of a new school or amalgamation. Hetton Primary and Eppleton cater for special needs of pupils in different ways. It is clear to see that where these schools succeed, is in their individuality but also, in their similarities.
  - All schools are well maintained and in ideal positions for their particular area. They also have fantastic outdoor space that definitely could not be replicated on any of the new proposed sites. This is despite the report that went to Cabinet stating that Hetton Primary was in need of repair and also has poor access.
  - Whilst reducing the PAN at Hetton Primary and Eppleton would seem like the best option, I would have concerns for future funding of the schools, which might lead to possible teaching redundancies. To re-model accommodation to fit the new net capacity again would cause concern. Hetton Primary already works with mixed classes even at a reduced PAN, class sizes will be already at the government recommended size of 30 pupils! Because Hetton Primary has worked this way for a number of years it is especially good at how it functions ensuring the best progress and education of all pupils. I don't think interfering with accommodation is in the best interests of pupils.
  - I would also question the LEA figures of a PAN of 20 leading to a full school of 150. 140 should be the true figure. This coming September we have 19 children applied to go to Hetton.
  - Closing the nursery and building on the Eppleton and Hetton Primary sites looks like an agreeable option, however it would mean that Hetton would lose a valuable nursery in the centre of town and would also involve possible new building works on both school sites. I would also have concerns about what land would be eaten up in doing this, as it may interfere with playing fields.
  - Having looked at all the options I would choose Option 1 or 6 though with some reservations! Having been at both consultation meetings I would also have to question why in September a number of options were put forward as viable, then in February the LEA have decided that there is now only one viable option – the one that nobody in Hetton wants.
  - I feel that too much emphasis has been put on just a short term solution and that the long term re-development of Hetton has not been taken into account. Population is on the increase – midwives are saying that the birth rate has already risen, again there seem to be some conflicting evidence. If there was a baby boom – where would the children be educated?
  - I do think there are other options – monitor the situation over the next five years, taking all factors into account. Consider the options again at a later date when more accurate and up to date figures can be used. Reduce the PAN at Hetton Lyons to see what effect this would have on the school itself and the pupil numbers in the other schools.

The respondent continued to make some general points about the consultation process:- October meetings being held on the same night as an open night at the secondary school as well as being held on the same night for both primary schools; not much notification of the meetings; lateness of minutes appearing on website; inaccuracy of minutes; Cabinet report not a true reflection of what people want or have said.

All in all, I feel, as do many parents and staff and indeed talking to people of the wider community, that despite a process of consultation, a decision has already been made. Hopefully, this will be a decision that takes into account not only the schools involved but also the impact the decision will have on children, parents, staff and the community, as well as the long term environmental effects on Hetton's history, heritage and future.

- There is a nice friendly atmosphere when approaching teachers, always there to help and that is because of the small class numbers. My eldest son attended a different school which had large numbers of children in each class that is why I chose a smaller class size for my youngest son.
- To keep the school on this site because the children are happy here, just the right number in the classes. Could cause bullying if went to a different school with bigger number of pupils in the class.
- I collect my grandchildren from this school and it would be impossible for my walking aids to get me and the children up to the proposed sites and back safely. The children recently came here in October 2008 as have others which are not included in your figures. Please do not close this school.
- Hetton Primary is a perfectly good school where it is situated now. My two boys moved from Shiney Row Primary in Oct 2008 and come on tremendously in just a few months of attending Hetton Primary. It already takes me 10 mins to walk to school each morning. My son and I

suffer from chronic asthma so we would not be able to walk any further. My two sons love their school so much and they are so upset about your proposals. You have not given the children of Hetton Primary any consideration on how they feel. You would save money by repairing Hetton Primary rather than knocking a building down. I've moved my children once and they will not be moved again! We are a close community and will not be pushed to merge with another school and neither will other parents.

- We need to keep our school. The new site is too far away for most people and it will have an effect on the kids with their SATs. Teachers will not want to stay and we will be left with supply teachers that don't know our kids as well as our staff do. Can we have a place at Hetton Lyons if we don't want to go to new school? I don't think you can. We need to keep our school!
- I am very upset that this school is facing being closed down, it is a really good school with caring staff and I am very annoyed that if another school is built class sizes will rise, so the children will not be getting the care and attention that they get at Hetton Primary School which is a really big mistake. My children's education and confidence has grown at Hetton Primary and I think moving them somewhere else will have an effect on their education. Why close a perfectly good school when everything runs so good and efficiently. This should not be happening at all, leave things as they are!
- My children love going to this school. I think the proposal for a new schools on the sites proposed is not acceptable. I walk my children to school and there is no way I could make it for 9.00am to any of the proposed sites from where I live. I will have another two children attending Hetton Lyons nursery in the next 3 years so it would be impossible to be in two places at once. Please save our school.
- The proposed sites are not suitable due to the distance from the children's homes.(x2) Some parents will have a 12 mile trip each day if their children do not stay at school for dinner. Eppleton and Hetton are two separate communities and have always been. A line should be drawn for the three schools, all children at Eppleton attend that school and the same for Hetton Primary and Hetton Lyons, this will increase the numbers at Hetton Primary. At present Hetton Lyons are teaching in pre-fabs, the new school is too small! The education at Hetton Primary is second to none, the teaching staff are excellent, and really care about the children. The children run into school, and are happy to be there. Why build a new school at Eppleton, what of the children at High Moorsley. Bring the children to Hetton Primary from Hetton Lyons who live nearer. Personally I will have over a 30 minute walk to the new sites, what about the parents with younger children, some have 2/3 younger children, do you really expect them to walk for nearly 60 mins to Eppleton, as toddlers do not walk fast. Leave Hetton Primary where it is.
- Along with everyone else in the area, I strongly believe that the 3 schools should remain open in their current state. Already Hetton Lyons is full and young children are being housed in pre-fabs. Pupils should be encouraged to go to Hetton Primary from Hetton Lyons – this seems to have been a disastrous strategy. Presumably as the consultation process has evolved, it has become evident to those that influence the final decision that no-one is in favour of the re-structuring of Hetton schools. Good schools (and nurseries) will close, excellent teachers will be forced from the profession and children will have to sit in overcrowded schools or travel over 1 mile to get to their nearest school. The strength of feeling in the town against the proposals will not go away and those affected will fight and question decisions until we win our struggle.
- We want to keep our school. Please note that our PAN is 20, we already have 19 intake for September. Where is parental choice here? (x2)
- No consultation has seriously taken place and the council seem to rely on parent apathy. In Hetton, this is plainly not the case as thousands have put their name to a petition to stop the proposals.
- Remember these children have to walk home very tired and expected to do homework. Their education will suffer greatly. In fact by doing this my children will receive none because they will be too tired! This journey is unacceptable as I have to take two younger children – what about bad weather – one of my children has special needs and tires easily. Without Hetton Primary the community will have nothing. I do hope you read this and put it into reality not your graphs. I'm disgusted by this whole consultation process it has been a joke too many unanswered questions. Well we have a voice and we want answers now!
- This is all about politics and nothing else. You do not care about our children's education or wellbeing, or you would not be proposing this ridiculous plan. We are all voters and we will remember what you have done the next time you want our vote if you pass this decision.
- Moving the school would lose links with Easington Lane Church. Please listen to the people of Hetton.
- Why is it always down to saving money?

### Comments from Headteacher

- For a final proposal I feel there is insufficient detail and clarity. It proposes a single school but the process of achieving this remains very unclear, even after questioning officers. To propose to close potentially three successful schools, that serve their distinct communities exceptionally well, and replace them with a single school that still has so many question marks surrounding it is not, in my opinion, strategically sound as a final proposal.

Whether it will be an amalgamation of the three schools i.e. a new school on a new site with a new name or the closure of two schools and a named receiving school i.e. a new build of an existing school on a new site is still to be decided. The outcome of this decision will have a significant impact on our school community. How can we consult on a final proposal without what is fundamental information?

I have serious concerns over the proposed timescale of approximately 3-4 years in terms of managing the closure of a school. Staff, whether because of job security or career paths, could leave. How can we employ "like for like", for example middle or senior management, if we are not able to offer permanent positions. I believe this will have serious implications on the quality of educational provision for our children.

I would like to question the feasibility of the proposed sites as to a large extent they contradict the proposal of three school communities becoming a single community; a high percentage of our school community would be unable to access the school due to the distance they would have to travel and the related safety, time and cost issues. I believe the proposal fails to recognise the uniqueness of the Hetton area which is made up of a number of very distinct village communities, some semi-rural in nature. I believe that the distance between the schools is too far to bring them together effectively as a single school community.

I feel very privileged to be headteacher of a caring, confident, happy and successful school community. The children are always our most important consideration and, in true partnership, all stakeholders are committed and determined to securing the high quality educational provision at Hetton Primary School, whilst addressing the issue of surplus places.

## Comments from Staff

- Our questions have not been answered so we are no further forward than the last meeting. We need to know:- Dates, where new site is going to be, what is going to happen to Hetton Primary school. No thought has been given to our children who are the most important and will be affected greatly.
- Save our primary school and give us the nursery. Our school is a lovely school, the staff and the children are all marvellous. Please leave us alone and help our community and save us we need the TLC the school provides for staff and children.
- In itself the proposal seems a fair option but there are many questions which are unable to be answered. The main question is what will the school be called? To me the only fair option would be a completely new name otherwise, in effect, you are simply closing either of the 2 schools and naming the other as receiving school. Where will the school be built? Why hasn't the existing Hetton primary site not been considered? We have considerable links with Hetton School – something parents/teachers/children alike all find invaluable, this would be lost if the school was moved the distance proposed. There are no timescales given, we need to know when this will be expected to open.
- First I'd like to know which of the 6 options I am offering my comments/views on! We were told one of the 6 options would be chosen for further consultation. What we actually got was a completely new option which was a combination of 3 of the 6 options offering us no certain decision as to the future of our school, our children's future or the future of our school community or staff. This is not something we were told could/might happen. It is my understanding that when a single school establishment is created, joining together 2 or more schools then the site needs careful consideration to ensure no community is disadvantaged with regards to distance etc. The sites proposed all favour the other schools involved resulting in our parents having a dangerous, long walk over at least 2 dangerous busy roads. Is this fair to all involved? Also the site on which Hetton Primary stands is an ideal site to promote transition between primary and secondary stages of education. The children at Hetton Primary access and utilise facilities other primaries within Hetton cannot due to proximity to Hetton School. Is this something that should be lost? Also some clarification is needed on the name of the school and the impact this will have on pupils, staff and the community. It appears that proposals seem to suggest the site will favour the Eppleton Community for location and distance – can the school therefore not favour the Hetton Primary community with its name. There are lots of questions to be answered/clarified before it is actually possible to comment on the proposal actually chosen for our school – when we are told what it actually is! (x2)
- The idea of working in the interim period as a federation is again very unclear and without any direction from people making this decision or certainty in the feasibility of its existence.
- The very long introduction and the reiterating of facts we already knew prohibited and limited our contribution to the proposal in this phase of the consultation. Time was short and comments rushed as a consequence and compounded later in the parents meeting by the chair taking valuable time away from our "voice" detailing his own experience and continuously distracting our train of thought and contribution by commenting on the officers' intentions and his own interpretation of what happens!
  - The appraisal of the proposals were based on principles agreed by Cabinet and through "consultation" but we are still waiting for evidence of this as nothing we or any other members of the community have suggested have influenced the proposal!
  - Furthermore, how could the six options we have been considering change into one different proposal that lacks clarity, at this late stage; changing the goalposts and undermining the process.

- The synopsis of the “Options Appraisal” that was highlighted had equal weighting, missed out vital details, for instance in the “community” and “alternative use of surplus” use of our school building, that is used by Barnardos for community and several projects as part of extended schools provision and SSCO delivery! Also, we still would like to work with the LA to address surplus places by transforming current and future community use of our building but feel we haven’t fully been given the opportunity to.
- Where proposed sites are concerned, I can’t comprehend how the Cabinet would make a decision, then you would undertake feasibility studies, because of cost implications – what then happens if none are feasible?
- The fact that we are on the same site as the secondary school and have excellent liaison which widens the opportunities for our children should be taken into consideration as this is one of the main findings in the NCSLs research on “federations” and their benefits. Distributed leadership is another which we also practice.
- By considering this site would surely enhance opportunities; ease transition enormously; promote continuity and progression which would lead to increased provision and gains in teaching and learning as we all work together for the benefit of the children in our care. Why not a campus model with nursery and primary feeding into our secondary? The benefits would be enormous and there is plenty of research to verify this on the NCSL’s website and case studies on the DSCF website.
- In conclusion the DSCF’s advice is that a federation cannot be imposed by an authority and would be unworkable if it was as only the Governing Body can decide.
- N.b. – inaccuracies in minutes at all stages and late delivery; misinterpretation of our proposals and principles; lack of clarity and true consultation; little strategic pro-active approach to challenges now facing; anomaly between reducing surplus places and new build – is 10% part of the remit for procuring BSF/PSfC funding for instance; wrong way to lead schools into 21<sup>st</sup> century as role model as whole process is not transparent, rigorous, or clear and stifles parental choice and children’s needs.

### Comments from Residents

- I would like the Cabinet to consider keeping Hetton Primary on it’s current site. Local residents are already considering leaving Hetton in the search of a primary as small and friendly and also as outstanding as Hetton Primary. Closing the school will affect local economy if these people move out. We will have nothing left here.
- Keep Hetton Primary where it is, as it is!
- Any of the proposed sites are too far to travel. The children are happy here. Excellent school as it is and where it is. I am concerned about kids being killed crossing the major roads to the 3 proposed sites. As a carer of kids at this school it is easier and safer to collect them from here. Attendance will be affected especially in bad weather.

### Comments from Others

- The proposed new sites are too far away. The children I take to school now and in the future are under the age of 7. How do you expect children this young to walk such a long distance and then do a full day at school? Children as young as this will be tired from the long walk and won’t be able to concentrate on their work. Please address these concerns and raise them with Cabinet.(x2)
- There are other ways you can address surplus places in our school. I urge you to revisit your proposal and re-think your decision. As a resident of Hetton I am advising you that Hetton do not want a new single school incorporating 3 of the schools in the area. Please listen to our views.
- I am a grandparent of a child that attends Hetton Primary. I take my grandchild to school on several days each week. I do not drive and currently 64 years old. I would struggle to walk to the proposed sites as the distance from my grandchild’s house is too far. Please listen to the concerns raised by myself and pass this on to Cabinet as I feel they have not been informed of the accurate distance and time it would take to walk to the proposed new school. I am sure I am not the only grandparent who takes their grandchild to school and I’m sure they would have the same concerns I have expressed over the distance.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Hetton Nursery School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 79 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	45 (1 form had no comments)	1		
Headteacher	1			
Governor	3 (1 also staff member)	1		
School Staff	10	1		
Resident	7	1		
Pupil				
Other	7			2

In addition to the above responses, a form was also submitted jointly from the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery with the following comments:-

As a collective response we feel that the following points need further consideration:-

- Consultation process – this has been inconsistent and as a community we feel that we have not been listened to.
- Strength of feeling against the proposal – the volume of petitions signed need to be taken into account.
- Impact on community – a full and thorough understanding and analysis needs to be undertaken.

We formally object to the proposal and strongly feel that if it proceeds, it will be to the detriment of the Hetton Community and their families.

**Petitions**

1. A joint petition for Hetton Nursery, Hetton Primary and Eppleton Primary schools was received. The petition includes 2,674 signatures and states:

These petitions are presented on behalf of Hetton le Hole Nursery School, Hetton primary School, Eppleton Primary School and the Community of Hetton who are opposed to the proposal to replace the existing three schools with a single school.

They ask the Council to intervene and stop the proposal that will involve the closure of highly successful schools that serve their distinct communities extremely well. The petitions are presented to demonstrate the strength of feeling from the Community of Hetton against the proposal and the detrimental impact that closure would have.

2. A petition of 1,909 signatures was received and states:

These petition forms are presented on behalf of Hetton Nursery School and the Community of Hetton, who are formally opposed to the proposed closure of the Nursery school. They ask the Council to intervene and stop the closure of the Nursery and by presenting these petitions we hope it gives an indication of the strength of feelings from the Hetton Community and the impact that closure would have.

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- The proposal and the process adopted by the officers is seriously flawed and I do not believe councillors are being given accurate or adequate information on which to base decisions, if they are treated as I have been. Having recently received minutes of the meeting, these have not been Quality Assured and contain many omissions (eg concerns around children's health from active quarrying near some proposed sites) - Attendees have not been given opportunity to comment on their accuracy, I certainly perceive bias in the reporting as my concerns regarding lack of clarity or detail in the content of the options papers were not reported. Similarly comments made surrounding late inclusion of the Nursery in the actual consultation process have been glossed over and twisted.

Parents have effectively been told the nursery will be closed (should any option go forward) BUT that they will NOT BE GIVEN ANY ASSURANCE that similar services (availability during non term time, opening hours etc) will be replicated. Continuing that theme the Officers were unable or unwilling to answer questions (other than confirming the 'statutory minimum standards' will be available) on the level of provision equipment and outdoor play areas (eg grassed areas) will be available. Given the current facilities the children enjoy, this is perceived as meaning fewer/poorer facilities is all parents can expect, though given the vague responses all we can be sure of are the site locations. Speaking as a manager rather than a parent, I found the officers to be unprepared and frankly unprofessional. Questions were not answered fully and only after persistence by parents reframing the same questions in different ways were we even able to establish a 'statutory minimum' type answer, while as stakeholders (and taxpayers employing these Officers) we should have been able to expect full answers with details being volunteered, not pulled like teeth. Were these officers in my employ (and their actions not directed from a higher authority), I would tend to refer them to a Job Centre with advice to seek employment as a shyster rather than public servant, which they plainly are not. All in all it reflects poorly on the Councillors that they have allowed what should be an open and honest process to devolve into one of secrecy and farce, where members of the public have come away thinking the Officers only agenda has been to consolidate schools in order to save money, while as enlightened parents we realise the benefits of 'investing' in children's education, not pairing it down to a 'statutory minimum'. A level of Excellence is what the parents would seem to have, all these Officers assured us of was mediocrity though perhaps a few pennies less Council Tax. I'm also appalled that the so called sites have only undergone the most cursory of assessments (and many impediments were identified by locals and professionals within civil engineering) and may even be suitable without investing ridiculous sums, simply as these Officers have not performed adequate research into the site proposals. Indeed continuing the shyster theme (and again missing from the minutes) when questioned the Officers repeatedly advised previous new builds had always come in on budget, but only repeated questioning revealed that the budgets were set AFTER the site had been selected, AND only then is feasibility study, prepared. These actions hardly warrant pride in saying 'on budget'. So in the case of the poor selections here, the tax payer will be forced to spend large sums due to what is in my opinion, negligence in the councils fiscal duty, and perhaps even greater sums if it later transpires that children's health has been affected (and legal action against the council/councillors results).

- The proposal to close Hetton nursery is disgusting and not based on local community or children's needs. The LA representatives are deliberately misleading Cabinet with false and inaccurate information. It is laughable to say that the authority would replicate provision, quantity and quality. Please note Hetton Nursery is on a 2000m2 site and the authority has openly stated the new nursery provision would be on a maximum site of 450m2. How does this equate to replication? (x4) Minutes from the previous meeting have been fabricated to support the authority. Five points which I clearly asked to be minuted have not been. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion the minutes have been inaccurate. This is not consultation, this is dictatorship! Sunderland Authority are trying to bully the local community and local council/cabinet. By closing a school which is over subscribed and has no issues with surplus places. As a close knit community we will fight any decision to close this nursery to the very highest authority. The Authority is discriminating against Hetton Nursery and not complying with their own policies and procedures. I do not believe that the authority will take any notice of any of our responses as they didn't the last time. But I would advise that this fight has just begun and we are a community who will not be bullied!! Appalling, disgusting, vile, inaccurate, misinformed proposal! Bullies never win!
- We have been given no educational reason to close our nursery other than to accommodate falling places at 2 local primary schools, why should you involve us in this. (x3). Our nursery is first class, has excellent staff, properly training to a high standard, brilliant facilities and gives a very high quality education which is what nursery schools are all about. Why don't you listen to the families in this community who very much want, need and value Hetton Nursery. The babies and young children of today are the adult of tomorrow and a sound early years curriculum foundation is what has been happening in Hetton Nursery for many, many years through generations and must remain so.
- I feel the schools and nursery schools are in the right place for all children to attend.
- The nursery is an asset in the current position, also the facilities and garden are second to none. If it were to close it would be such a loss to the community.
- Nursery should be left open – its excellent. (x4)
- Unnecessary closure of a good nursery school. A happy environment for pre-school children. (x11)
- If it isn't broken – don't fix it! (x2)
- Really good nursery with great facilities. (x3)
- Please keep this nursery.
- This is a much needed and loved facility. No-one wants this to happen, no one wants a new nursery school. We have everything we need here i.e. facilities, staff, resources and most importantly our beautiful and much needed garden. This proposal is not taking children into consideration this is all about money and government satisfaction only. Not one person I have spoken to is in favour of this proposal. It is an absolute disgrace for our future children and community. Think very carefully before you destroy so many people's lives!!
- This is all about politics and nothing else. You do not care about our children's education or well-being, or you would not be proposing this ridiculous plan. We are all voters and a lot of people in Hetton have been labour supporters all their lives. If you pass this proposal the people will not

forgive or forget and the next time we vote in an election. This will have a huge detrimental effect on Hetton. Please leave us alone.

- I've had children come to this nursery – it has been going for many years and is a good and respected nursery and I think it should not close and should stay here for many children to come. (x2)
- I wouldn't like Hetton Nursery to close because it's a much needed part of the community.
- Lovely nursery, see no reason for closure.
- You must listen to the community, what the people of Hetton want is the best nursery school education for their families, not a nursery class which is nowhere near as dedicated what we have now. This is a disgusting and downright criminal waste of our hard earned money paid as taxes to possibly allow it to close. It is an absolute outcry there are not enough words to describe the high feelings within the community. Everyone is talking about it and they all give the same message. LEAVE HETTON NURSERY SCHOOL STANDING. The council employees who front these meetings cannot even answer questions we ask all they are doing is paying us lip service which is insulting in the extreme, they are not listening or taking into any sort of consideration our wants and needs which are to remain with a nursery school status which has been proven over and over to work with excellent Ofsted results – what more evidence apart from the many, many happy satisfied families and their children. We do not want a nursery class.
- I can't believe that anyone would think of closing such a lovely place its so caring and happy. I have never had anything to complain about here.
- The proposal to close the nursery and create a super school with educational nursery provision is definitely something as a parent I am opposed to. My priority, as should be yours, is the children. You cannot and have not given an educational reason for the proposed closure of our nursery. This nursery is at the heart of our community and has highly trained and committed staff – the results are reflected in its superb Ofsted report. The nursery has just had a superb extension built which also serves the public with various workshops – putting the building to great use and getting the local community involved with our children. Think and consider the children, they need the best possible care and start in life in a safe secure nursery with staff who care about them. The children are treated as individuals and not numbers which would inevitably become the case if the new "super school" was to go ahead. This has proved right in other areas so we must not allow this to happen in our area, for our children to suffer.
- Our nursery is full despite your figures. Childcare has a waiting list of 50+, where will all the 2 year olds Gordon Brown want to get 15 hours nursery go? We don't want or need a flashy new school. Leave our nursery school where we are!
- I feel that the nursery should not be closed as it is an excellent nursery, and I know from experience its places are always filled. My son was not allocated a place in January because of this, and he had to start in the September. I also feel it is much better for the children that the nursery is on a separate site and not attached to a school. The nursery has excellent facilities, the teachers are excellent with the children and my son loves going to this nursery.
- This will only mean job losses and putting the teachers to find employment elsewhere out of the area. Use common sense and leave Hetton Nursery open.
- The closure of this nursery is crazy, there has been no thought at all by the council. They have got no idea what they are talking about. I am a parent of 4 children, 3 of which went to Hetton Nursery and are doing fantastic at school because of the early start they were given. My 4<sup>th</sup> child is supposed to be going to this nursery. I personally feel that he would not get the same benefit anywhere else as his sisters did. The nursery is in a central area to all schools and have excellent facilities and staff.
- Surplus places do not apply to Hetton Nursery. Many parents feel yet again something that is valued in our community is to be taken away by the people who think they know better. Its about time these people on the council listen to the people of Hetton as we are sick of these councillors taking things we value and treasure away from us. Do something for us for a change instead of yourselves.
- I think it would be a disgrace to close the nursery because it's the closest for parents like myself. It would be unfair to the children to have to go a lot further. I have no transport and Hetton Nursery is in a perfect place as it's not far from where I live.
- I am very disappointed with the proposed closure of the nursery. My child attends this nursery and they have been very flexible with the hours that suit me as a working parent, not many other nurseries offer this facility. Could you please try your best to keep this nursery and childcare open as it is providing its best for children and the community.
- Our grandchildren who live with us attend this nursery. I strongly object to any future plans to close the nursery. It has given our grandchildren an excellent start both educationally and in their own confidence. The personal touch they receive from the staff and the headteacher gives us a massive confidence that we can rely on. This nursery must not close!
- It will be a big shame if this nursery closes. My 2 sons have come a long way since they started. It's a really good nursery.

#### **Comments from Headteacher**

- I am totally opposed to the proposal, as I feel that there is no clear justification for the inclusion of Hetton Nursery School. Reasons given have either been invalid or weak. I strongly believe in the

value of nursery schools, and national research supports this. The size requirement for internal and external areas that you have supplied is an insult, considering that we have been told during consultation that quantity would be replicated – clearly it will not. I also feel that quality and specialism will not be replicated in nursery provision in a primary school. Why look to nursery schools for support in raising standards in FSP scores, then propose to close one of your best assets with no valid justification? I would also like to raise concern over the future of the childcare provision for Hetton families (and the security of jobs for staff). Our 47 place registration is based on floor space of the whole building; the space requirements we have been given clearly informs me that the registration number would be reduced. Childcare staff on 1:3 or 1:4 ratios, and a reduction in registration would lead to loss of staff and expertise. A nursery school has a 1:10 ratio, whereas nursery classes have a 1:13 ratio so the children of Hetton would already be disadvantaged in what is a disadvantaged area. The actual needs and dynamics of the community have not been considered.

I urge you to look towards research for what is best for Early Years provision and outcomes and re-consider the options. Consideration into the value of nursery schools and the presumption against closure guidelines need further scrutiny. Also the impact on the community must be explored further, strength of feeling and parental preference features highly within government documents – how much has this been considered in consultation? If the LA is adamant to pursue new build, then please explore the option of a new build nursery school for birth to 5 (or even Foundation Stage school) that has the outdoor provision that the children of Hetton currently have and deserve. No reference was made to this alternative during phase 3, yet it is the only option if quality and quantity, along with the value and status of our Nursery school is to be maintained.

### Comments from Governors

- I am totally opposed to the proposals. At no stage have I been convinced that our children will receive the same educational standard. This has been reflected in the two consultation exercises. We have been assured of replication of services but replacing 2000m<sup>2</sup> with 450m<sup>2</sup> of total space does prove these statements (published in media) are untrue. In a time of increasing obesity, this reduction in space can not support the health advice given. The minutes have been distributed but not agreed prior and where we have been advised that representatives have consulted with us, this has resulted in them saying things like we will agree to disagree which is not consultation rather than dictating what we are getting. This proposal does not look at the educational needs of our children only finance and ticking boxes for regeneration purposes. What good is a shiny new school when the standards are below that which currently exists. We do not have surplus places! The only reason they exist at the beginning of a new term is because Sunderland LEA policy drives it. The childcare provision is excellent and with a massive waiting list, this supports the need for such a service and that reputation is our advertisement. This whole exercise regarding the nursery is difficult to understand and as a local authority you are prioritising finance over children's education. By all means address surplus but as a taxpayer, I find it difficult to appreciate that closing our nursery is a benefit.
- I cannot find any valid reason to close Hetton Nursery and re-open the facility as a nursery class attached to a primary school. If the proposal was to build a new nursery school with all the facilities that the current school has, then I feel that would be acceptable by everyone. If the intention for closure were met, we would have difficulty fighting this but none of the government's guidelines for closure have been met. It is Government policy to keep open nursery schools and only to close them in exceptional circumstances. Complaints must be made about the consultation. Many mistakes have been made by Children's Services. The first consultation was only made with me on the day letters had already been posted to all concerned proposing closure. The second consultation was to take place in conjunction with another school where parents of that school may possibly have been proposing the closure of our nursery in order to improve their numbers. We had to fight to have our own meeting and reluctantly Children's Services agreed. All along no one from Children's Services has contacted the parents of childcare children informing them of the proposals, it was left to the school and these are parents of children that will be affected. All in all the consultation at best has been poor. If the proposal to the Cabinet is to remain the same as it is now, the fight to save Hetton Nursery as a school in its own right will continue to the highest authority possible.
- I strongly disagree with the proposal to close this school. I still find it hard to believe the way we have been "tagged on" to address surplus places when we are over our allocated number of places and have healthy waiting lists for our nursery and childcare.
  - There are no problems with our building, it may be old, but it's sound, solid. So why can't we be left as we are or be given a new building on the new site but stay as a nursery school with childcare.
  - Parents and staff want the best start possible for the children of Hetton and I feel this would not happen by becoming a nursery class or early years unit attached to a primary school. Even though we have been told it will be replicated, the children wouldn't have the same space indoors or the fantastic outdoor areas which we have now.
  - How could the head of such a large school still be able to spend time and give input on a daily basis to the youngest children and their parents – something which is important to them and staff – expertise, knowledge and support would be lost!



- How can you justify closing a well-established nursery school with very high standards, excellent Ofsted results, flexible places and wraparound childcare to meet the needs of the community, social services and 2 year old pathfinder places, a very well used community room and very happy children, parents, dedicated staff and governors?
- I think everyone feels very strongly that our nursery school should be left out of this proposal altogether as it has nothing to do with surplus places in the two primary schools. Either leave us as we are or if we have to have a new school, put us on site but staying as a nursery school with a headteacher, not part of the primary school – the top end of Hetton has one – why can't we?
- Against the proposal of closure and change from a nursery school to a nursery class – reasons being:-
  - There would be loss of expertise from a nursery school to a nursery class. At present we have 2 members of staff EYPS
  - We also have yet to be given information on proposed numbers for a nursery class?
  - The word replicate does not mean in this case nursery school to nursery school i.e. staff, buildings, 2000m2 grounds, location, childcare. We are at present central i.e. 5 mins walk from shops, park, library, lakes & wildlife, doctors and very soon new swimming baths and the main bus station. All playing a very large part in our foundation Stage Education.
  - No documentation has been offered by Children's Services to parents accessing our childcare. Children attend from surrounding areas.
  - Again we have no surplus places at our nursery school. Numbers given are for Sept intake and due to Sunderland admissions policy. We are full with waiting lists.
  - This closure of our nursery school into a nursery class is again government guidelines.
  - Why was Hetton Lyons nursery allowed to continue as a school alongside the new primary? All children in Hetton are entitled to quality and quantity.

### Comments from Staff

- Hard straight facts:-
  - Brought into this equation (as it began 6 months earlier) midway
  - Organisation/timing/venue etc of meetings – no consideration given to us. We had to ask for our own meeting.
  - We do not have surplus places, "over subscribed".
  - Full consultation not given, or even considered
  - High standards must remain for community
  - Ofsted – outstanding
  - Generations of families state our good reputation
  - Excellent links in community
  - Much need for outreach teams/families in need (commissioning, pathfinder etc)
  - Central location, affordable quality childcare
  - Sound foundation start, of the utmost importance
  - Reports given to cabinet do not represent nursery fairly and cabinet haven't been informed of impact of closure
  - We have a healthy waiting list for the next two years
  - Parents want and need Hetton Nursery School.
- I feel that the proposals to close Hetton Nursery School should not go ahead. There is nothing wrong with the nursery, so why try to fix it? It has no surplus places, and has been recognised by Ofsted as being good with outstanding features. (x2) The nursery provides excellent facilities and a large outdoor area which are currently well above minimum requirements. The new build cannot be guaranteed to be the same size, therefore depriving the children of Hetton, especially those who live in houses with no gardens the opportunities to thrive in the outdoor environment.(x4) By closing Hetton Nursery school it will leave experienced and qualified staff out of jobs. If it is closed what will happen to the childcare which takes on commissioned children? The childcare currently has a waiting list for a place, doesn't this show that it is a good nursery school.?
- I totally disagree with the proposal. Hetton Nursery is a valued nursery, the provision of children comes first for parents and staff. As a member of staff, I have quite a large family, a lot them attended Hetton nursery so therefore I see it to be wrong to close down Hetton nursery. The nursery has many facilities other nurseries have not. – an extremely large garden which the children love, also soft play facilities, would the children be guaranteed this elsewhere? (x2) The extended hours (15) childcare is vital for some working parents. No valid reason have been given to close the nursery – our children's education is paramount.
- This nursery has been part of the community and is well established. It has good relationships with parents, carers etc which has been built up over the years. The nursery meets every child's needs to make sure they reach their goals, give them confidence to grow. Parents comment on how their child is developing and pleased with the way we learn them. The nursery is a caring school. Why should you close something that works well. The building and the scope of the gardens are outstanding which a new building cannot provide as the space of a new build will be smaller and no facilities will match what we have.  
You have not thought through properly the needs of this community. Bigger is not always better. It's quality that matters. All staff are qualified, know their roles and responsibilities but there has been

no support for us. We are just a number and no feedback has come back to give us support. Why don't you leave us as we are – happy and committed. (x3)

- The nursery has recently had an extension built that is currently being used by the community. We have a very good relationship with parents/carers and provide a relaxed friendly environment where parents feel they can talk to us, would that happen with one headteacher running a larger school, would the headteacher have a good relationship with all parents? In childcare we are full and have a waiting list we also provide care for commissioned childcare and pathfinders these are vulnerable families who need the support from a friendly caring environment which is what we provide.
- Closing the nursery would have a huge impact on the Hetton community, parents have made this very clear in consultation meetings but sadly they feel that they are not being listened to. I cannot understand why the LA are proposing to close a very popular and successful school at a time when standards in early years have been highlighted as unsatisfactory and nursery schools have been asked to help to improve FSP scores. The nursery does not fit the criteria for school place planning, we have no surplus places now and had only 10% in September for 1 term. The building is sound, so why are we part of this proposal? New build is not always best for children's education and development. Our outdoor areas are fantastic and would be a sad loss. It has unique features which cannot be replicated. Finally I feel that Hetton Nursery has not been unfairly treated and represented in the consultation. We had no stage 2 and very little was said about the nursery in cabinet reports. Hetton Nursery should remain open and primary school issues should be addressed separately.
- I strongly disagree on the proposed closure of Hetton Nursery school. I feel that the staff and parents have not been treated with any respect or consideration and most importantly that the children of Hetton are going to be totally disadvantaged by having a fantastic, well equipped and outstanding nursery school taken away from them. Hetton Nursery is a school within its own right and should be kept that way. All children deserve the best start in life and that is why I feel that is paramount that the nursery school remains open to give the children of Hetton the very best start in the very best place. I strongly believe, as a resident of Hetton and a former pupil that closure of this school will have repercussions that would not be in the best interests of Hetton as a community or for our children and their future.
- I think we should NOT be closed as we have a brilliant nursery school and childcare. We have had a good quality and outstanding Ofsted, so if not broken, don't mend it. We have outstanding outside facilities which will not be replicated, which our children need. A lot of our children only have back yards, so they can't run or play safely. We have also added a community room built onto the nursery. This helps parents and children do things together, meet other parents eg arts and crafts. There is also a toddler group run by childminders who all love our outdoor areas which are spacious, safe and secure. Other parent and toddler groups in the area do not have access to the outdoors as we do. This nursery has been part of our community for the past 60 years and is in the heart of Hetton. Why change a good nursery for second best?

### Comments from Residents

- No 'surplus place' justification for closing nursery. No educational justification for closing nursery. You just want the site.
- Unnecessary closure children need a school. (x2)
- I am strongly against the proposal for Hetton Nursery school. The school is a major part of Hetton community – it has been for a long time and should continue to be! Hetton's community consists of mainly small terraced houses, with little or no outdoor space. Our children need outdoor space to run about and learn in an outdoor environment. Closing the nursery would take away their chance to learn and take risks in a safe and secure environment, and therefore impacting upon their physical development! The proposal states the nursery would be replicated. I cannot see how either the quality of teaching or the quantity of space could be replicated. The minimum requirement does not even cover ¼ of the outdoor provision space the nursery currently offers! Also the loss of expertise is a major concern of mine. A replication does not take into account the loss of a head teacher who is dedicated to under 5's and the EYFS curriculum. I believe the consultation process has failed school place planning guidelines. I am disgusted at the way Hetton Nursery has been treated. Please look at the evidence which is staring you in the face!
- I am strongly opposed to the closure of Hetton Nursery. It has been and continues to be the centre of the community, it plays a vital part in early years education, catering for the needs of children from 0-5 years. The nursery is successful with no surplus places and has recently had an excellent Ofsted report, it also has a newly built community room which is used on a regular basis. I fail to understand why a full, successful nursery is earmarked for closure. Would nursery provision in a school have the same facilities or expertise in early years education as Hetton Nursery does? I suggest not. The proposed closure is totally unjustified. I would ask you to look again at the facts and keep Hetton Nursery open.
- I have to say I don't get the proposals for Hetton at all. This will cause disruption to every primary school in Hetton. My solution would be – make Hetton Lyons bigger and close Hetton Primary but leave the rest alone. I know Eppleton is all about putting a road through nothing to do with education. Your proposal will mean that children from Moorsley, Peat Carr will go to Hetton Lyons. Half of Hetton Lyons will end up at the new school. Like I say you are disrupting every child in Hetton's education. It's all about money not the children as usual.

- I hope this facility is kept, as it is a central, convenient and much loved facility for our local community.
- Hetton Nursery is a major part of Hetton! Proposals to replicate concern me. Does this replication provide our children with the same quality provision as the nursery currently offers us? There is no guarantee the numbers would be the same in childcare, which would mean the replication would not offer the current provision which our nursery offers. If you are adamant on a new build, build a new nursery school – let's value the status of nurseries! National research into early years provision states that the best provision is in nursery schools, not nursery classes. Our Ofsted report in 2008 recognised the outstanding personal development and wellbeing given to children through their time in nursery – would this be the case in a nursery class? The recently built community room is a great asset to our community. The proposal to close the nursery is a waste of taxpayers' money. Would this community room be replicated in a new school with a nursery class? I am absolutely appalled at the way Hetton nursery has been treated during the consultation process! The LA has made an absolute shambles of the consultation process. You need to listen to the views of staff, parents and the community – something you obviously have not done so far! Open your ears and your eyes – what you are proposing to do is outrageous!

### **Comments from Others**

- I may not understand establishment or legal terminology, but I do understand the well-being of very young children. Their early years education, development and social awareness. Also the needs of working parents. With this in mind, I feel the closure of Hetton Nursery is totally unjustified. Not only for the reasons stated above but for the contribution to the community as a whole. The nursery has been for many years, part of the town's fabric and should continue to be so. The staff and associated helpers, whom are all very experienced, qualified to a high standard and sympathetic to the children's early years development, are dedicated and very professional which reflects on the excellent recent Ofsted report. If I were to list the pros for the nursery to continue alongside a list of cons against the outcome would be a resounding YES – KEEP HETTON NURSERY SCHOOL OPEN!
- I can't understand why you would close a business that is such an important part of the community. It would be tragic!!
- We need to keep it open it is a really good nursery school. Has been for years.
- To close Hetton Nursery school would be a great loss to the community. The facilities and expertise it offers families cannot be replicated in a primary school. Please leave Hetton Nursery along and address surplus primary places separately.(x2)
- Facilities second to none; excellent teaching skills; children's education paramount; both my grandchildren have developed to an excellent degree which includes skills like speech, manners, caring, tidying, sharing as well as pre school learning. Will new schools be able to replicate all of the above?!!
- I love the teachers and attended nursery and childcare. I still visit I love the children.

### **Letters received**

Friends of Hetton Nursery School submitted the following:

- Consultation has been unfair, prejudiced and incorrect with lack of information being presented. Sunderland Education Local Authority has failed:
  - To comply with its own consultation strategy which stated that formal consultation must begin at phase 2, and Hetton Nursery came into it late in phase 3.
  - To treat all parents as equals, in line with the Corporate Equality Scheme – half of our school community (i.e. childcare parents) were not sent any formal consultation documents or letters
    - Also within the Equality Scheme, the school was not treated with fairness as initially we were not offered our own consultation meeting for parents as a school in our own right.
    - No statistical information relating to Hetton Nursery was included in phase 3. This was not provided as we were told that numbers were not an issue for the school. Misleading statistics were provided at phase 4, when the initial argument for surplus places at Hetton Nursery was presented to us.
    - The nursery was not named in the main report to Cabinet in October 2008, yet in the appendices 2/3 options for the Hetton area were to close the school!
    - The Nursery was unfairly represented in the report to Cabinet in February 2009. Misleading language was used referring to "both schools" or "either schools" implying that only two schools were in the equation. The Nursery has not been given equal status or fair representation in reports submitted to Cabinet.
    - The LA has not applied its Equality Scheme when outlining surplus places. If a school that had 10% surplus places in September (although now at 107% full) we are being brought into consultation, why has this 10% criteria not been applied

across all schools? Our 10% surplus was based on one item rather than across an annual scoring.

- The LA have not followed the Government Guidelines for the Presumption Against Closure for Maintained Nursery Schools and Hetton Nursery can provide evidence for this.
- National research into the best provision for Early Years (EPPE) states that the best provision is in Nursery schools not nursery classes. The LA have not taken into account national research.

The Friends of Hetton Nursery School action group feel that Sunderland LA are not listening to our views and are not consulting with us, but dictating to us. We feel that we have not been represented fairly and that correct procedures have not been followed. Representatives of the LA have not treat parents and local community members with respect and in many occasions have been rude and unprofessional.

Proposals – As the consultation process has been unfair and inaccurate Hetton Nursery School should be removed from the consultation process or consultations should start again with clear justification for why schools are included (along with factual information presented). Including Hetton Nursery in the proposals will have no impact on surplus places within the Primary Schools and this was acknowledged during stages 3 & 4 parents meetings at the nursery.

## **FROM PETER DE-VERE, UNISON REPRESENTATIVE**

### **Hetton Nursery**

After the initial meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009 with the staff of Hetton Nursery, UNISON met afterwards with members to gather the concerns and issues.

The opinion of the staff is as follows:

- Why has the nursery been targeted when they do not have falling pupil roles and the waiting list for admissions is huge?
- As it stands now the nursery has 2,000 sq metres, but has been informed that the allocation in a new build would be 450 sq metres. As most of the children who attend the nursery only have backyards at home, the staff are concerned they wont enjoy the outside area that they have now.
- The staff doesn't feel that the nursery closing has a cost issue, as money is still being spent on it. (Why if they are planning to close it).
- The parents and carers attending the nursery are opposed to this and have 2,500 signatures currently on their petitions.
- An overwhelming view that the nursery is extremely successful so 'don't try and fix what isn't broken'.
- It wasn't initially in the plan to amalgamate the primary schools and the nursery. So why is it now?

### **UNISON'S view is this:**

The Council's argument is that there will be no change to the provision itself, simply a change in Management. There is nothing simple in what is proposed other than the fact that what the Council intends to do is close the Early Years Centre. This is the closure of a Nursery School and the loss of a specialist early years centre and a specialist head teacher.

The government's major research project EPPE, (The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education) found that maintained nursery schools, and those integrated centres that grew out of nursery schools, such as our own Early Years Centre, had the greatest impact on young children's intellectual and social development, on their subsequent progress in school, and provided the highest quality and most effective early years settings.

This is confirmed annually by OFSTED inspections. In 2006/7 49% of nursery schools were judged outstanding. 46% were good.

Nursery Schools were also the sector of schooling most often rated outstanding. Only 13% of primary schools and secondary schools achieved the same rating.

Early Years Centre's most recent OFSTED report is evidence of the quality of our education and care.

OFSTED said of our school that 'care guidance and support was an outstanding aspect of provision. Staff and Governors show clear commitment to ensuring children's health, safety and well being'.

The Council are suggesting that the move to a nursery class will improve transition into primary school but OFSTED noted that our 'Highly effective liaison between school and home ensures vulnerable children are given the best possible chance to succeed at this stage in their learning preparation for the transition to reception classes is equally impressive, as links with the local primary school are well established. Parents say they are kept well informed on their children's progresses'.

The Council argues that 'the best way to ensure long term high quality nursery provision is to take the opportunity to move the Management of the nursery provision to the primary school'.

Evidence does not support this. Nursery classes do not provide the same quality of educational experience for the youngest children as nursery schools do. Research evidence from the ongoing EPPE project is supported by OFSTED reports that provide regular and persuasive evidence of the distinct contribution made by nursery schools to providing quality experiences for the youngest children.

The staffing ratio, and routines and learning environment of the nursery school create an ethos very different from that of a nursery class or unit. It is an illusion that this infrastructure can be dismantled and reassembled without loss.

The developmentally appropriate curriculum of the Foundation Stage requires expert interpretation and is vulnerable to top down pressure.

Amalgamation with a primary school removes the specialist nursery head teacher, who is best able to promote and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching at this distinct stage. The loss of the nursery head also has implications of staff development and the maintenance of a knowledge base of early childhood education within the Local Authority.

Hetton Nursery is not only far too good to lose it could be the Centre of a radical and innovative development that would include the whole Foundation Stage. It demonstrates how well children achieve when the foundation stage is organised as a coherent whole within a Children's Centre offering support to families and younger children.

The Government do not want to see nursery schools close. Indeed there is a presumption against their closure, especially if they have the capacity to become children's centres. We are already children's centres in all but name.

UNISON shares the views of the parents, the Governors and the Community that this is a successful nursery school and should be left to carry out the outstanding work they do.

**SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE  
STAGE 4 CONSULTATION RESULTS (Feb – Mar 2009)  
Eppleton Primary School**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED**

A total of 22 responses were received for this school.

**Q1 Are you responding to this consultation as a:-**

	Response form	On-line response	Email	Letter
Parent/carer	10	1		
Headteacher	1			
Governor				
School Staff	5 (2 are also parents of pupils)		1	
Resident	3			
Pupil				
Other				1

In addition to the above responses, a form was also submitted jointly from the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from Eppleton Primary, Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery with the following comments:-

As a collective response we feel that the following points need further consideration:-

- Consultation process – this has been inconsistent and as a community we feel that we have not been listened to.
- Strength of feeling against the proposal – the volume of petitions signed need to be taken into account.
- Impact on community – a full and thorough understanding and analysis needs to be undertaken.

We formally object to the proposal and strongly feel that if it proceeds, it will be to the detriment of the Hetton Community and their families.

**Petitions**

1. A joint petition for Hetton Primary, Hetton Nursery and Eppleton Primary schools was received. The petition includes 2,674 signatures and states:

These petitions are presented on behalf of Hetton le Hole Nursery School, Hetton primary School, Eppleton Primary School and the Community of Hetton who are opposed to the proposal to replace the existing three schools with a single school.

They ask the Council to intervene and stop the proposal that will involve the closure of highly successful schools that serve their distinct communities extremely well. The petitions are presented to demonstrate the strength of feeling from the Community of Hetton against the proposal and the detrimental impact that closure would have.

2. A petition of 1,140, signatures was received and states:

We, the undersigned strongly support the continuation of Eppleton Primary School as it is, on the grounds that it is a relatively new building (25 years old), well maintained and in good condition, it is well placed to serve the community, significant new housing is planned for in the immediate vicinity and the school's educational provision and pastoral care are of a very high standard.

3. Also received was a copy of a parent's Facebook petition to save Eppleton School, which has 554 members.

**Q2 What are your views/comments on the proposal for this school?**

**Comments from Parents/carers**

- I think that the school should be left where it is. It is an absolutely fantastic school, with fantastic staff and even better children. The buildings are adequate, the class sizes are perfect. What more can I say. EPPLETON SCHOOL SHOULD STAY WHERE IT IS.(x 2)
- Statistics used become untrustworthy when they evaluate, using figures for all of Sunderland in relation to figures relating only to Eppleton area and school. They do not give true or fair representation due to above. Investigation into impact on community and area in respect of employment, child welfare and 'cost' not fully realised. Closure of Hetton Nursery MUST take into account closure of CHILDCARE, nursery provides and what this means to employment and child poverty in region. Statistics of '12 children' to 100 houses not proved or substantiated. Views of

community not taken into account. Hetton Lyons childcare is already over subscribed. The taking away of childcare in area during a recession MUST BE SERIOUSLY considered. I have major concerns that during consultation it was stated that at Hetton Nursery the childcare element was not even taken into consideration. Application of 'new' and more 'robust' procedures need to be put in place for the consultation to start again in a more 'relevant' and area specific manner.

- You cannot provide one educational reason in your proposal to close Eppleton and open one huge super school. The pupils are happy and are achieving good results all round. This is reflected in its recent Ofsted report. Why change something that works and suits everyone's needs perfectly well? The staff there are highly motivated and committed to the children. The pupils are happy to attend school. The building is relatively new and serves its purpose extremely well and it is in great condition. The school occupies a large site which provides excellent opportunities for the children to play, learn and participate outdoors. Very important with Britain's childhood obesity problem. We do not want to move onto a smaller site with hundreds of children of school age and pre-school age together. Children at Eppleton are treated as individuals and the school has excellent provision for special needs pupils. Why lose all of this? Eppleton over the years with the commitment of its staff lead the way in providing a safe, reputable place for our children to learn and develop. If children are happy it shows in the school's performance – as per the Ofsted report. If our children are happy, then we as parents are happy and we simply cannot afford for what Eppleton has achieved and strived for to be allowed to fall by the wayside. Eppleton Primary must remain open.
- Rebuilding a new school which will be bigger and will destroy all of what has been achieved at Eppleton School over the last 25 years. We do not want to amalgamate with other schools on a new site. Think of the children when making these decisions. Realistically class sizes of more than 20 are not beneficial to the children or the teachers in any school.. Central government needs to step into the "real world" and look at the quality of education and teaching in these smaller schools. Teaching staff have more time to assess and work closed with children in a class of 20 pupils rather than a class of 30. The benefits outweigh everything else – in smaller schools the children all know each other, incidents of bullying are few and far between because of this. We want our school to stay where it is – right in the heart of really good community.(x2)
- The proposal concerns me greatly. Not only is this for geographical reasons but also for educational reasons which I must stress has not at all been entered into discussion from the council and questions regarding this ignored at consultations.
  - There is proposed housing in the area of 400 houses. The council claims that only 100 houses is new housing as 300 houses will be replacing existing housing therefore only accounting for 12 new school children. However those 300 houses have either already been demolished or are empty awaiting demolition therefore the number of children will go from a proposed 12 to 48.
  - It is assumed that pupils from Hetton Primary will want to attend the new super school. I think the council will find this a dangerous and huge travel for these pupils and would most likely want to attend Hetton Lyons which has already been through planning for the future and had a new building built on its site. However pupils are being taught in prefab buildings as at present the school is not big enough. When questioned about this it was said that this would not be needed in 2 years however I think Hetton Primary pupils should have been factored into this which they clearly have not been as these pupils are all in the same area whereas Hetton Primary and Eppleton are approx 1.5 miles apart over many busy roads. It is a major concern that the council have previously got it wrong for the people and the children and their education is suffering!
  - Eppleton Primary is less than 25 years old and has been maintained and cared for extremely well. Why spend £5.75m on a new school when a good existing school could be modernised at a fraction of the cost? Eppleton Primary should be considered as the new site. The school could easily be extended to cause minimum disruption and at much lesser cost than a new school. It could also house the nursery element this would also complement Eppleton's breakfast and after school clubs as the nursery also offers private nursery with the same hours.
  - The three proposed sites have me concerned – one is allegedly contaminated. Another has poor road access and is located extremely close to the lakes. This leaves only one site which could be a viable option and this site as with all the others would not allow playing fields and excess outdoor space due to the size of the area. While the government are proposing healthy living why would proposed sites not allow for these.
  - Finally as a parent I hope all these points are put forward to cabinet as previous consultations emailed responses were not! Again a great concern at the council's ability to deal with this issue and a great concern regarding its transparency.
- If there is to be one super school – will you consider Eppleton Primary school site to be the new "improved school" I can't believe that the council/government would waste vast amounts of money building a new school from scratch when this school could be brought up to date for a fraction of the cost.
- I am very unhappy at the proposal for a new school. I do not wish my sons to attend a mixed Hetton/Eppleton school. Reduce the PAN and leave Eppleton alone. My two sons are achieving better than they did at their previous school. Eppleton school's education is fantastic and the love and willing to always help one another is always felt there. Community spirit is at a low because of these proposals! Add to the school and bring it up to date but don't take it out of Eppleton. Parents

are unhappy at the thought of any disruption to their child's education. If the school merge they are not going to mix well, then the same goes for the teaching staff. This could spoil my son's education but no-one seems to care about that. Leave the school as it is!

- Its closer and local school. It's also an excellent primary and I would prefer my son to go there.
- I'm a mother of a child with Aspergers. My husband and I were thrilled when we found Eppleton Primary school, we made huge sacrifices so that my son could attend this fantastic school. It has a very high standard of education, it is also very nurturing. The head and staff should be commended for this. To close this school would be sacrilege. The proposal for a new larger school would be detrimental to my son's education. Special needs children would not cope with a larger mainstream school. Also what would the carbon footprint cost to pull down a 25 year old building.
- The plans to merge Eppleton and Hetton Primary schools and Hetton Nursery are in my mind lacking in sense, oppose many government policies and waste tax payers money. The public have a strong opinion, we do not want an overcrowded, pokey new build on a new urban site. We want to keep Eppleton school.
  - Eppleton school is modern, well equipped and large enough to accommodate children from both schools. It is economic and quoted as one of the cheapest in Sunderland to run and maintain. A new school will cost approx £5.5m to site and build, where as building changes, if a nursery is needed , would cost around £50k.
  - I am not a fan of the disruption a merger causes, or of the loss of small schools. If the council is set on saving money, Hetton Primary is expensive to run, has high repair bills and is not big enough to house all Hetton cluster pupils. It is 500m from Hetton Lyons Primary and has parking problems. The only sensible solution is to close, or merge it on the Eppleton site. Hetton Primary is not a suitable building, there can be no xxxxx? between schools.
  - We already have everything we need and more on this site. Eppleton is in a beautiful setting, the children play in a large yard overlooking beautiful countryside. I can only assume this is refreshing for children giving them a sense of calm, and allowing them to enjoy the outdoors in a safe environment. Please stop promising us to build a like for like building on a new site, when we already have everything we need and more on this site. It makes me so angry that the council is selling our hearts and souls for a regeneration that is not for the people it serves, but only looks good to an outsider.
  - The regeneration of 450 new builds will bring more young families and subsequently pupils to the area, and 12 children per 100 houses does not make sense for family style, new-build estates. The council needs to wait and act on actual figures not "predictions" with so much room for error. Especially, as if Gillas Lane closes, pupils will no doubt opt for Eppleton over Bernard Gilpin, as it is Ofsted appraised as a better school.
  - It would be destructive to the local close knit community of Eppleton if the school were to be taken away. If the school is re-sited it would no longer serve the intended deprived community, this would strongly go against the Primary Strategy for Change which is about making schools more community orientated and extending use of schools into the community. The community hold this school in high regard and have already expressed an interest in using the school for keep fit activities, social and community meetings, and computer courses. The football field is used by local teams and could be further used with the simple addition of floodlights. Eppleton school is an essential community building for the Eppleton and Bloomfield communities. These communities are officially classified as deprived and must have a community building which is not located further out into Hetton.
  - Eppleton school is working at its peak performance for results, has a fabulous reputation and great teaching staff. It has an atmosphere that teaches children morals, respect and a high regard for the school and local community. A merger on a new site would leave the pupils and staff needing to rebuild these attributes. Both staff and children would be unsettled and need to re-bond and re-ascertain their role within the new organisation. Many would leave as a result. A merger is a recipe for unsettled troubled times for teachers and pupils alike.
  - When children are depersonalised they are more likely to get involved in attention seeking behaviour which could lead to getting involved in the wrong crowd and later criminal activity especially a problem in deprived areas. Depersonalisation of pupils occurs in larger schools as teachers can't possibly be expected to personally know each child. The family style bond of a small school cannot be maintained when pupil numbers are doubled, this is when year groups segment and transference of values between year groups is hindered.

### Comments from Headteacher

- The proposal itself ("A single school to be established...") is not one of the six options which we were asked to consider, but it gives less detail, thus leaving all stakeholders in the dark about what exactly will happen, job security, siting, timescales, educational and childcare provision etc.
- The proposal, brief as it is, does not reflect the autumn consultation, and the volume of response from those who have an interest in the three schools. Those responses supported the retention of each school, in Eppleton's case, with the reduction of its PAN to 25. It begs the question, "what value public consultation?"
- I feel that, with the planned new housing (400 to 500 houses), particularly social housing, the resulting number of children will be considerably greater than the formula (12:100) would suggest.



- Whilst our numbers at Eppleton have been decreasing, the potential for new housing is great and would put Eppleton as it exists now, at the centre of a thriving community. Hetton Nursery, itself, is full to capacity, and Eppleton receives its intake from there. This is a happy arrangement because Hetton Nursery provides well for its children in terms of both its educational provision and also its 50 week a year dedicated, modern childcare facility.
- I have heard that the sites identified as possible sites for the new school all have associated problems (road salt pollution, flooding, young offenders institution) and will need feasibility studies. One of them is only three or four hundred yards from Eppleton's extensive grounds which have no problems. Why has this site not been considered – no feasibility study needed, no problems and room for expansion. Once the land on which Eppleton Primary School now stands is given up for other uses, it can never be recovered.
- The planned North Access road from the A184 ends in a roundabout right at the school gates. This plan is now on hold pending the outcome of the spp process. That suggests to me that the road is still a serious possibility, despite its dangerous and foolhardy proximity to the school entrance and it's blocking of the children's home to route school from Pearson's Estate and Elmfield Estate. Unless I am convinced otherwise, I cannot see that the plan for the road can live side by side with the school. If the road is to service new housing, I suspect the school will have to go.
- Further comments – although it is not a factor, I would like to draw your attention to the quality of provision at Eppleton School.....judged by Ofsted as good with outstanding features.... Parents are happy with provision and care..... KS2 SATS results have been consistently above or in line with national average.
- The school building itself is comparatively modern – approaching its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary – and is in good condition, well-maintained and well-used.
- Eppleton Primary serves a distinct and quite isolated community which relies on the close proximity of the school for easy access. Surrounding the school is land which is undeveloped. This puts Eppleton in quite a remote position from which access to the next nearest school is relatively distant, particularly in an area of low personal car ownership. Outline plans exist for considerable house building – Hetton is a priority for housing regeneration. Despite the formula quoted for estimating number of children per housing 100 houses, we have a situation where, from one new estate of 42 houses, there are over 30 children attending Eppleton Primary.
- One of the drawbacks of the proposal are the distances to travel. It would mean travelling great distances for many families living in the extremities of the communities. In an area of high deprivation where benefit dependency is very high, car ownership per household is very low and public transport is inadequate, the proposal could create huge difficulties for families getting their children the considerable distance to school and could put children at risk because of the number of busy roads to cross every day.
- The process for consultation has been questioned and has been found wanting in many respects. At our consultation meeting on 26 Feb, none of the questions asked were satisfactorily answered, and information was not available. The clarity and transparency of the process have been called into question, as well as the sincerity of the consultation because it was disclosed that responses to the options, if sent as emails or letters, were only counted, not read. Only response forms were read and summarised, according to those making the presentation at the consultation evening.
- In light of the fact that substantial regeneration is planned for this area, albeit not in the immediate future, and that infrastructure is planned to service that regeneration, the school population is very likely to recover. The present building will be able to cope with that increase, having been designed for considerably more than it presently holds. It is relatively new, twenty four years in fact, and will cost a good deal less than a new build. However the governors are mindful of the fact that it takes up a great deal of LA land, along with the old Eppleton school land which is adjacent to the present school and that it could be a source of income, were it to become available to the City council. Yet, in an age where we are so concerned about the health and fitness of the young generation, about levels of obesity, and about delivering the Every Child Matters agenda, we should be proud of the fact that our children have the space and facilities at Eppleton to develop and flourish. Once it is given up, it can never be reclaimed for the purpose of educating our young children. We, as governors and I, as Headteacher, would urge you not to pull down this lovely building which serves its young population so well, but to consider ways of using its present spare capacity until its intake once again reaches levels of 30+

### Comments from Staff

- The proposal bears little resemblance to the six options initially offered. It is too vague to make a decision on, I need to know implications for staffing (e.g. which school will be the receiving school or will it be an amalgamation) and class sizes and composition (e.g. will it be a 1, 1.5 or 2 form entry with implications for mixed classes). It is difficult to imagine staff, parent and governor views are taken into account as I feel this decision has actually, already been made. Why weren't staff given information about the new road proposal or information about the lack of response to our previous consultation feedback forms at our consultation meeting when apparently governors and parents were?
- I was pretty disgusted by the only proposal given to us as a school and a community to build a single school on 3 possible sites. All 3 sites were in my opinion very bad locations and solutions. I propose that you keep Eppleton Primary where it is and extend to accommodate the children from Hetton Nursery and Hetton Primary. Our school is a superb school, the community rely on its

location, the children are extremely happy coming to school. Both my 2 children love the school and it's a disgrace that you want to demolish a relatively new school and for what! To take the land back and build on it. LEAVE OUR SCHOOL WHERE IT IS PLEASE!.

- I along with many other people involved with Eppleton Primary School cannot understand the reasoning behind the closure of this school. Why build a new school at a cost of £5m when there is more than enough land to extend Eppleton to incorporate a nursery unit as well as extra space to accommodate the extra pupils from Hetton Primary, at a fraction of the cost. Eppleton is only 25 years old, it is part of the community. The facilities in school are of a very high standard throughout. We have had glowing Ofsted reports. Why disrupt the lives of the children who attend Eppleton a lot of who have social problems. They see Eppleton as a safe haven, a place where they feel secure with staff that give them help and support. These children would need to cross busy main roads to attend a new school – are you taking this into account with your plans? Eppleton is like on big family. Don't take that away. In today's economic climate can you honestly think that wasting £5m of tax payers money is going to be looked on gladly. I don't think so. Put the children first. KEEP EPPLETON OPEN for their sake.
- After attending another meeting I think the proposal to close Eppleton school, would be an utter disgrace and devastating to the surround community. We of Eppleton would be left with one shop, and a cricket club, Eppleton would be practically wiped off the map. I don't agree with the way forward being to build one super school but if so why not consider having this new school on the existing Eppleton site. There would still be a school "Hetton Lyons" at one side of Hetton and Eppleton at the other. Over the years being born and raised in Eppleton we have seen one after another of our amenities taken away. Please for the children and the community have a rethink before jumping in with both feet.
- The 'One Site school' should be at Eppleton Primary. We have a young building, great facilities, excellent staff and much more to offer. So transfer Hetton Nursery and Primary pupils here.
- The recent proposal does not reflect any of the 6 options first proposed. If one of those options had been proposed at least staff, parents etc would know where they stood. I find it hard to believe that one of the proposed sites is yards away from a perfectly good school. Also the proposal does not state a "new" school, just a single school. Therefore with the proposed sites in mind with 2 being totally inadequate due to contamination and flooding why was the current site of Eppleton Primary not considered. I also find it hard to believe that the numbers for Hetton Primary were not looked at long before now and therefore considered when building Hetton Lyons. You speak to anyone and they will say that they prefer smaller class sizes. The children get the most from their teacher and therefore thrive and excel at school. If school places are national issue then why are universities still taking on Bed and PGCE primary students., when there are no or very few jobs for NQTs to go into once qualified? It is hard to believe why Hetton Nursery is considered in this plan when their numbers have not been affected. Eppleton and Hetton Primary are quite a distance from one another, its not as if they are even close enough to consider amalgamation on any of the new sites proposed because they are both at opposite ends of Hetton, which takes me back to the point of not considering Hetton Primary with Hetton Lyons when they are so close together. I cannot believe that money has taken higher priority over children's education especially as you cannot tell us how the "single school" will be made up either by amalgamation or closing one and naming the other as the receiving school, and it is this information that is key.

### **Comments from Residents**

- Recent "consultation" with parents appears to have had no measurable effect on an outcome which might have been predicted by anyone who has been paying attention. This has registered widely among most interested groups. As is usually the case in Sunderland LEA, the imperatives of accountants have been given priority over any conceivable educational considerations. None of this is at all surprising; I've remarked the problem in the past.
- I think the council are not prepared to listen to anyone and I think it is sad that a perfectly good school is under threat of closure. I believe when plans first came up that Eppleton Cricket Club was going to be used for the regeneration (such as housing and new roads) but because they fought against this and won the battle now you want the school. Building a new school only metres away is senseless and when they say it is to amalgamate to raise the admission numbers it is rubbish because children who go to the other school under threat live a great distance from the areas that are being proposed. I think it is all very sad that the council think houses and roads are more important than education. It is going to cost less than half to repair our school than it is to build a new one. Eppleton School is excellent with great pupils and staff and should be left alone.
- I oppose the move of site for Eppleton school. Ideally, for the sake of our community and children's welfare, Sunderland Council would keep our small schools open, to provide a caring personal setting for our children. When class sizes fall below 15 for 4 years running, we could consider closing. Even the consideration should be made into new estates or an aging population which could be replaced by young families. What I cannot understand is the council closing Gillas Lane and Eppleton schools. This leaves no choice but Bernard Gilpin. If the council close both schools, or move Eppleton further away from Gillas Lane, I shall have to move from the area before my toddlers reach school age. I would rather move than send my children to Bernard Gilpin. I have visited the school and found that the children have a lack of respect and have not bonded as a peer group. I believe this stems from school care and guidance and reflects a failure of the school. Soon to get worse when Gillas Lane children attend the school, as the Hall Lane estate children need care and

attention to raise their academic standards and improve their prospects in life. Raise care standards at Bernard Gilpin before considering closing such a lovely school (Gillas Lane) where community, care and standards are high or moving Eppleton away further from reach.

## **Letters received**

### **Eppleton Primary School**

We are going through the School Place Planning consultation process at present and it has not been a happy process. All the parents are unhappy with the way it was handled and so are the teachers and governors. We feel we weren't listened to at all or were fobbed off. We would like to complain.

#### **Consultation**

Firstly, lots of people sent in their response forms during the Options consultation. We don't know of any that said they wanted closure. That includes the other schools as well – Hetton Primary and Hetton Nursery. We asked the officers of the authority why a proposal to close had been put forward when the overwhelming response was not to. Who else did they consult with that was more important? They did not give us a satisfactory answer, in fact they said it was the process that mattered. We are complaining that they have not used the consultation process properly but have followed their own agenda. It does not look as though they followed DCSF guidance which states, *"the removal of surplus places should always support the core agenda of raising standards and respect parents' wishes by seeking to match school places with parental wishes."* Eppleton is a good school with high standards and all the parents that we know want it to stay here.

#### **Response Forms**

The response forms were not accessible almost until the end of the consultation process because you could not write on the electronic sheet or send it. They said they took notice of the responses that were on the proper response forms, but they only "counted" the e-mails or letters. That is what they said at the meeting at Eppleton. I think it was either Val Thompson or Mr Campbell who said it. A parent at the meeting told them that at least three people in the room had sent emails but the authority's summary document showed "0" email responses. This gave rise to considerable suspicion over the validity of the process. We are complaining about the unsuitability of the forms and the way the responses were handled.

#### **Information**

There was no hard information given at the options consultation. The officers did not know about several issues and said they would get that information for us. We are still waiting. Information such as the school population maps, planned housing numbers etc. The main person from the authority could not tell us anything, and we were left wondering what we were being consulted on. We are complaining about the lack of information to on which to make a judgement.

#### **Stakeholders**

Hetton Town Council was not consulted at any stage yet they are a significant part of our community. Hetton Nursery was not included in the consultation until Stage 3, when suddenly they were part of it. We strongly feel that this makes the consultation invalid.

#### **Hetton Nursery Numbers**

We heard that Hetton Nursery does not have surplus places except in the Autumn term, and that was only 5 out of 50. (10%). If pupils could be admitted on their third birthday there would be no surplus places even in the Autumn. It's the authority's admission policy that skews the figures. The rest of the year it is full, so although we are supporting Eppleton, the consultation is based on wrong facts, and if Hetton Nursery is full why is it part of the plans for closure. It seems like the authority is stretching the regulations.

#### **Options/Proposal**

At the options meeting we had six options to discuss on the understanding that one of those options would go forward as a proposal. The proposal was nothing like the options. At the Proposal consultation meeting, we asked for more information about the proposal because it was so vague that it didn't tell us anything. What about the school's teachers and other employees' jobs; what about timescales? It has less information than any one of the options. We feel that the process was misleading for the reasons that the options must have been a red herring.

### **Map Sites**

We were shown a map with three sites marked as possible sites for the new school. This was even more misleading because Mr Campbell told us we couldn't talk about sites because it was too early in the proceedings yet he gave out copies of the map. Then Mr Campbell said the three sites were not definite and there could be more, even the school site could be considered. This was confusing to everyone because he introduced a misleading document when the issue was not even up for discussion.

It just seems like the whole exercise has been just that, an exercise to fulfil a requirement but having no substance. I am speaking for many parents when I say that this consultation has been flawed from the start and should be done again properly. The authority officers have been vague and evasive and we have not been given sufficient information to allow us to respond on the basis of known facts.

**At a meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bell, Kelly, Paul Maddison, Snowdon and D. Wilson together with Mrs. P. Burn, Prof. G. Holmes, Mrs. C. Hutchinson and Mr. D. Snowdon.

**Also Present:-**

Councillor Tate – Chairman of Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P. Dixon, Gofton, Oliver and L. Walton together with those from Mrs. D. Butler, Mr. M. Frank and Mr. A. Pearce.

**Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2009**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

Item 4 – School Place Planning for the Future

Councillor Snowdon declared a personal interest in the item as she had chaired consultation meetings in respect of Gillas Lane and Hetton Primary Schools.

Councillor Stewart declared a personal interest in the item as a relative was employed at Hylton Red House School.

Councillor Bell declared a personal interest in the item as Chair of Governors of Hylton Red House School.

## School Place Planning for the Future

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated), which updated the Committee on a report taken to Cabinet in February 2009 in respect of School Place Planning and outlined the Stage 4 consultation process which was currently being undertaken.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Val Thompson, School Place Planning Manager, together with Lynda Brown, Head of Standards, presented the report highlighting the rationale behind the proposals for each cluster including a synopsis of the options appraised.

The Chairman then welcomed representatives from the community who were objecting to the proposals in respect of the Hetton and Houghton clusters and invited them to address the Committee in turn.

In respect of the Hetton cluster, objectors highlighted the following points:-

- Hetton was a proud community and was against the proposal, a petition to this end was currently being prepared for Cabinet.
- There was huge dissatisfaction with the consultation process, opinions expressed against the proposal had not been taken into consideration.
- The 4 to 5 year timescale was a concern. What would happen in the meantime? Teachers and valued staff would look elsewhere to achieve job security. As a result, the children's education and welfare would suffer given the likelihood of the appointment of a succession of supply teachers. The community had not received an adequate response to this concern.
- The need to address surplus places was recognised. The community were more than willing to work with the Council to address the issue but had not been given the chance.
- There was a belief that the Council's approach had been blinkered, motivated by money and a one size fits all approach.
- The site of the new school was unclear. Of the 3 sites proposed, site 1 was on a constantly flooded field, site 2 was contaminated by salt and site 3 was 2 miles away from the Moorsley community.
- No answers had been given as to why the Highfield model had been adopted.
- The community strongly objected to, and could not understand why Hetton Nursery had been included in a proposal which was supposedly driven by surplus place reduction.
- It was not felt that the quality of a stand alone nursery was being recognised. The community did not believe that the quality of education and facilities of a nursery school would be replicated by a nursery class within a primary school. Hetton Nursery School's community room was only 6 months old, it provided child care, a Humpty Dumpty club, an art club and other community benefits.
- Parents felt they had not been listened to with regard to nursery provision. If the proposal went ahead half of Hetton would continue to receive a quality service (Hetton Lyons), the other half would not.
- The Committee needed to recognise that what was being proposed was the loss of 3 highly professional and successful primary schools. This success had been highlighted by Ofsted.
- Eppleton School was a good school in good condition and well maintained. It was on a good site which had potential for expansion. Its grounds were extensive (3.3 hectares) enabling the school to meet its every child matters responsibilities and to deal with obesity. If the site was lost to housing it could never be recovered.
- The area had been identified by the Council for regeneration and earmarked to receive 300-400 extra houses in addition to the 2 fairly large housing estates which already existed. Although the regeneration proposals were beyond the timescales of the current round of school place planning, the housing would be built eventually and Eppleton School should remain open as the centre of the expanded community.
- Concern was expressed over the timeliness and accuracy of the minutes from the consultation meetings.

- The Hetton area has the City's lowest car ownership, lowest income, poorest bus links and yet the proposals would force more children to travel further. This would place a greater burden on resources creating greater stress on families.
- The current 3 schools do an extremely good job in adding value to the community. Eppleton once had a pub, 3 shops, a church and a cricket pitch. The school now remained as the only centre of the community.
- The governing body of Eppleton School would welcome with open arms a visit from Cabinet to see the situation for themselves.

With regard to the Houghton cluster, objectors highlighted the following points:-

- Consultation was badly designed and carried out. It was not consistent with Council policies and in particular 'Every Child Matters'. Many people left the consultation meetings early through feelings of frustration that questions were not being answered and that they were just banging their heads against a brick wall.
- No effort had been made to ask pupils what they wanted.
- There were a lot of omissions in the options appraisals and a lack of consideration of the educational and emotional impact of the proposals on the pupils.
- There was confusion and a lack of clarity over exactly what was being proposed with regard to nursery provision between the 2 consultation meetings. Many people had responded to the consultation based on false impressions of what was being proposed.
- There had been a lack of a robust financial assessment of comparative costs.
- There had been a lack of consistency regarding the application of the options appraisals across clusters, for example, if the options for the Monkwearmouth cluster had been appraised logically then that school would close however this was not the case.
- The proposal seemed to conflict with statutory guidance regarding standards and surplus places. Option 3 was the only option which supported parental choice and yet it had been rejected.
- The proposed receiving school (Bernard Gilpin Primary) did not support the proposal.
- Concern that Cabinet will not receive the full picture and base its decision on one sheet of A4.
- Closure of Gillas Lane would see the loss of a first class ICT suite and library together with kitchen facilities which would need to be rebuilt at Bernard Gilpin.
- Classroom dimensions at the receiving school were smaller and yet class sizes were to be increased.
- Exception was taken to the statement that there would be no cross cluster issues. 134 children would probably face a longer journey to work increasing the amount of traffic on the road. Speed humps had already been installed in the area as a result of 'near misses'.
- 111 homes were to be built in the area, 83 of which already had planning permission.
- Costs had not been fully considered. Claims that savings of £250,000 per year would be made under the proposal were wrong. The Authority would ultimately make a loss if implemented.
- The most important factor related to education. Gillas Lane pupils came from one of the City's areas of highest deprivation and yet it was one of its top ten schools. Rather than be closed it should be held up as a shining example.

In drawing the representations to a close the Chairman granted a request to speak from Councillor Wakefield who was attending in his capacity as a Ward Councillor for Copt Hill. Councillor Wakefield explained that his ward covered areas within both the Hetton and Houghton clusters. He stated that the community clearly felt that consultation was not adequate and the options had not been considered fully. Elected Members had not been consulted in detail and he believed that the proposals for the Hetton and Houghton clusters needed to be reconsidered before submission to Cabinet.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments on the report from Members of the Committee.

Councillor Bell expressed concern that proposals would see pupils having to travel greater distances to school.

Councillor Kelly stated that he was alarmed, given the effort the Committee had put in, to hear the number of complaints being made about the quality of the consultation. He stated that he would like the opportunity to sit down and revisit the process.

In response to an enquiry from Mr. Snowdon, Ms. Thompson advised that the number of surplus places as a percentage was currently 16%. In response to a further enquiry from Mr. Snowdon, the Committee was informed from the public gallery that the number of people who had signed the petition against the Hetton cluster proposals was approximately 6,000.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman regarding distance, Ms. Thompson advised that the same exercise was done in respect of each cluster. The situation was somewhat difficult in the Hetton area in that there was a 'swirl' effect, with children from different areas in Hetton crossing each other on their way to and from school.

Following an enquiry from the Chairman regarding options for the Hetton cluster, a representative from the public gallery advised that the community had proposed a further option. She stated that if the new single school option was to go ahead, then the feasibility of utilising the current Hetton Primary Site for a campus style provision of separate nursery, primary and secondary schools should be investigated. The site was large with good access and close to community facilities like Hetton Baths.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman as to whether the option had been considered, Ms. Brown advised that if a decision was made to proceed it would be taken into consideration if that was what the community wanted.

Councillor Kelly stated that there was a difficult balance to reach. The three schools involved in the Hetton cluster were all committed to their own identity, ethos and history. There needed to be a broad view sought including those from the Elected Members for the area.

Councillor D. Wilson supported the view of the Eppleton Chair of Governors that Cabinet should undertake a site visit before making any decision.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman regarding the impact of future regeneration, Ms. Thompson confirmed that Children's Services worked closely with the Development Control Section. When schools were planned they were designed to take further expansion. The future proofing of Southwick School was cited as an example.

With regard to the Houghton cluster, Councillor Bell suggested that option 3 should be reconsidered as a valid option.

Ms. C. Hutchinson stated it was clear that there were concerns regarding the extent of the consultation. She felt that the public gallery had been clear in their desire to strike a balance between the education of pupils and the need to reduce surplus places.

With regard to the Monkwearmouth cluster, Councillor Bell expressed the view that one school would be best for the area. He did not believe that 3 schools within a mile of each other in Fulwell was viable.

Mr. Snowdon stated that it was obvious from the representations made to the Committee that people were willing to work with the Local Authority on the issue. What was important was finding the right solution.

The Chairman stated that the matter centred on the need to maintain a level of surplus places that was viable, i.e. 10%. The issue that had arisen was what options should be used to achieve that aim. The consultation exercise should have identified the way forward. If it had failed to do so, the Local Authority would need to find a resolution to the problem.

During the course of the debate, the Chairman highlighted the following matters that he felt should be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet for their consideration.

- i) a full explanation of the Hetton cluster swirl regarding the distances travelled, including an explicit depiction of the winners and losers regarding distances to be travelled should the proposal be accepted;
- ii) full clarification of the Directorate's position regarding early years provision and the replacement of nursery schools with nursery classes within primary schools, was there any national evidence to support this course of action?
- iii) the lack of clarity and confusion during the consultation process over the nursery provision being proposed for the Houghton cluster;



- iv) the need for the Local Authority to work closely within the relevant governing bodies over proposals identified;
- v) the Directorate to work closely with the Development Control Section to seek clarity over the impact of regeneration proposals and housing development on options for school place planning.

In conclusion the Chairman thanked the members of the public for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. He advised that he would ensure that a copy of the minutes of this meeting outlining their concerns was submitted to Cabinet for their consideration.

In reply Councillor Tate thanked the Chairman for allowing the community the opportunity to address the meeting and hoped that the Committee understood that the representations made had come from the heart.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that the representations made be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

(Signed) P. STEWART,  
Chairman.

## HETTON CLUSTER

### Note:

All percentages have been rounded

Table 1

	Area 1 - Peat Carr	Area 2 - Moorsley	Area 3 - Four Lane Ends	Area 4 - Easington Lane	Area 5 - Eppleton and Hetton Centre	Elsewhere in Sunderland	Out of Authority	Total
Hetton Primary	16	29	17	6	21	6	7	102
Hetton Nursery	6	4	8	4	32	1	7	62
Hetton Lyons	16	78	195	47	58	29	31	454
Eppleton	3	2	8	1	138	14	2	168
Easington Lane	2	2	9	192	5	5	10	225
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1,011</b>

Table 2

	% living in Peat Carr	% living in Moorsley	% living in Four Lane Ends	% living in Easington Lane	% living in Eppleton/ Hetton Centre	% living Elsewhere in Sunderland	% living out of authority
Hetton	37%	25%	7%	2%	8%	11%	12%
Hetton Nursery	14%	3%	3%	2%	13%	2%	12%
Hetton Lyons	37%	68%	82%	19%	23%	53%	54%
Eppleton	7%	2%	3%	0%	54%	25%	4%
Easington Lane	5%	2%	4%	77%	2%	9%	18%

Table 1

Shows the schools pupils are attending from each of the scattergram areas

e.g. of the 115 pupils in Area 2 - Moorsley- 29 attend Hetton Primary, 78 attend Hetton Lyons, 2 attend Eppleton and 2 attend Easington Lane

Table 2

Shows Table 1 in % terms e.g. 25% of pupils living in Moorsley attend Hetton primary, 68% attend Hetton Lyons etc.

## Hetton Primary School

### Hetton primary school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Hetton primary school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	37
0.5-1 mile	41
1-1.5 miles	12
1.5-2 miles	1
2-3 miles	3
3-4 miles	5
6-7 miles	1
10 miles	1
11 miles	1

### Hetton primary school pupils home to alternative schools/sites

	Home to Hetton Lyons Primary		Home to Eppleton Primary		Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2		Home to Proposed Site 3	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Closer to alternative schools/sites	54	53%	13	13%	23	23%	26	25%	14	14%
Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile	48	47%	15	15%	18	18%	33	32%	16	16%
Journey increased by over 0.5 mile	0	0%	74	73%	61	60%	43	42%	72	71%

## Hetton Nursery School

### Hetton nursery school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Hetton nursery school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	19
0.5-1 mile	26
1-1.5miles	8
1.5-2miles	2
2-3miles	2
3-4miles	3
5-6miles	2

### Hetton nursery school pupils home to alternative sites

	Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2		Home to Proposed Site 3	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Closer to alternative sites	20	32%	29	47%	20	32%
Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile	42	68%	33	53%	37	60%
Journey increased by over 0.5 mile	0	0%	0	0%	5	8%

## Eppleton Primary School

### Eppleton primary school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Eppleton primary school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	65
0.5-1 mile	71
1-1.5miles	6
1.5-2miles	21
2-3miles	3
3-4miles	1
13-14miles	1

### Eppleton primary school pupils home to alternative schools/sites

	Home to Hetton Primary		Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2		Home to Proposed Site 3	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Closer to alternative schools/sites	45	27%	73	43%	73	43%	132	79%
Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile	65	39%	64	38%	64	38%	36	21%
Journey increased by over 0.5 mile	58	35%	31	18%	31	18%	0	0%

**Note**- The numbers of pupils living closer to alternative sites, journey increased by up to 0.5 mile and journey increased by over 0.5 mile are shown correctly as being the same for sites 1 & 2

## HOUGHTON CLUSTER

### Gillas Lane

#### Gillas Lane primary school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Gillas Lane primary school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	89
0.5-1 mile	30
1-1.5 miles	4
1.5-2 miles	3
2-3 miles	4
3-4 miles	3

#### Gillas Lane primary school pupils home to Bernard Gilpin

	Home to Bernard Gilpin Primary	
	Number	%
Closer to alternative school	86	65%
Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile	47	35%
Journey increased by over 0.5 mile	0	0%

## HYLTON RED HOUSE CLUSTER

### Hylton Red House Nursery School

#### Hylton Red House nursery school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Hylton Red House nursery school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	29
0.5-1 mile	31
1-1.5 miles	13
1.5-2 miles	1
5-6 miles	1

#### Hylton Red House nursery school pupils home to alternative sites

	Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2	
	Number	%	Number	%
Closer to alternative sites	50	67%	31	41%
Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile	25	33%	44	59%
Journey increased by over 0.5 mile	0	0%	0	0%

## Hylton Red House Primary

### Hylton Red House primary school pupils home to school travel

Distance travelled from home to Hylton Red House primary school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	223
0.5-1 mile	99
1-1.5 miles	40
1.5-2 miles	8
2-3 miles	3
4-5 miles	2
5-6 miles	1
7-8 miles	1

### Hylton Red House primary school pupils home to alternative sites

	Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Closer to alternative sites</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Journey increased by over 0.5 mile</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>4%</b>

## Willow Fields Primary School

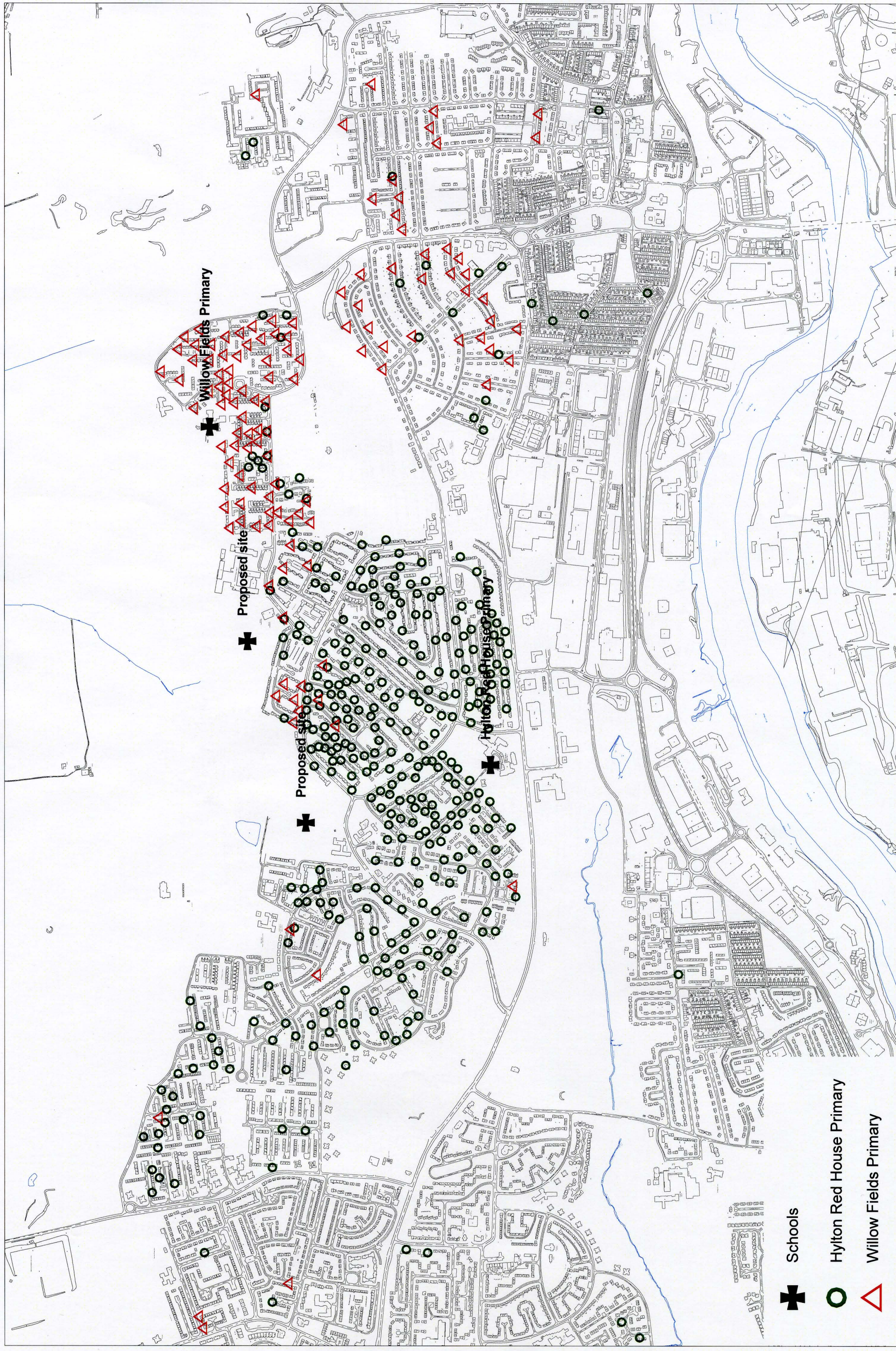
### Willow Fields primary school pupils home to school

Distance travelled from home to Willow Fields primary school	Number of pupils
0-0.5miles	31
0.5-1 mile	64
1-1.5 miles	16
1.5-2 miles	1
2-3 miles	3
7-8 miles	1

### Willow Fields primary school pupils home to alternative sites

	Home to Proposed Site 1		Home to Proposed Site 2	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Closer to alternative sites</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Journey increased by up to 0.5 mile</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Journey increased by over 0.5 mile</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9%</b>

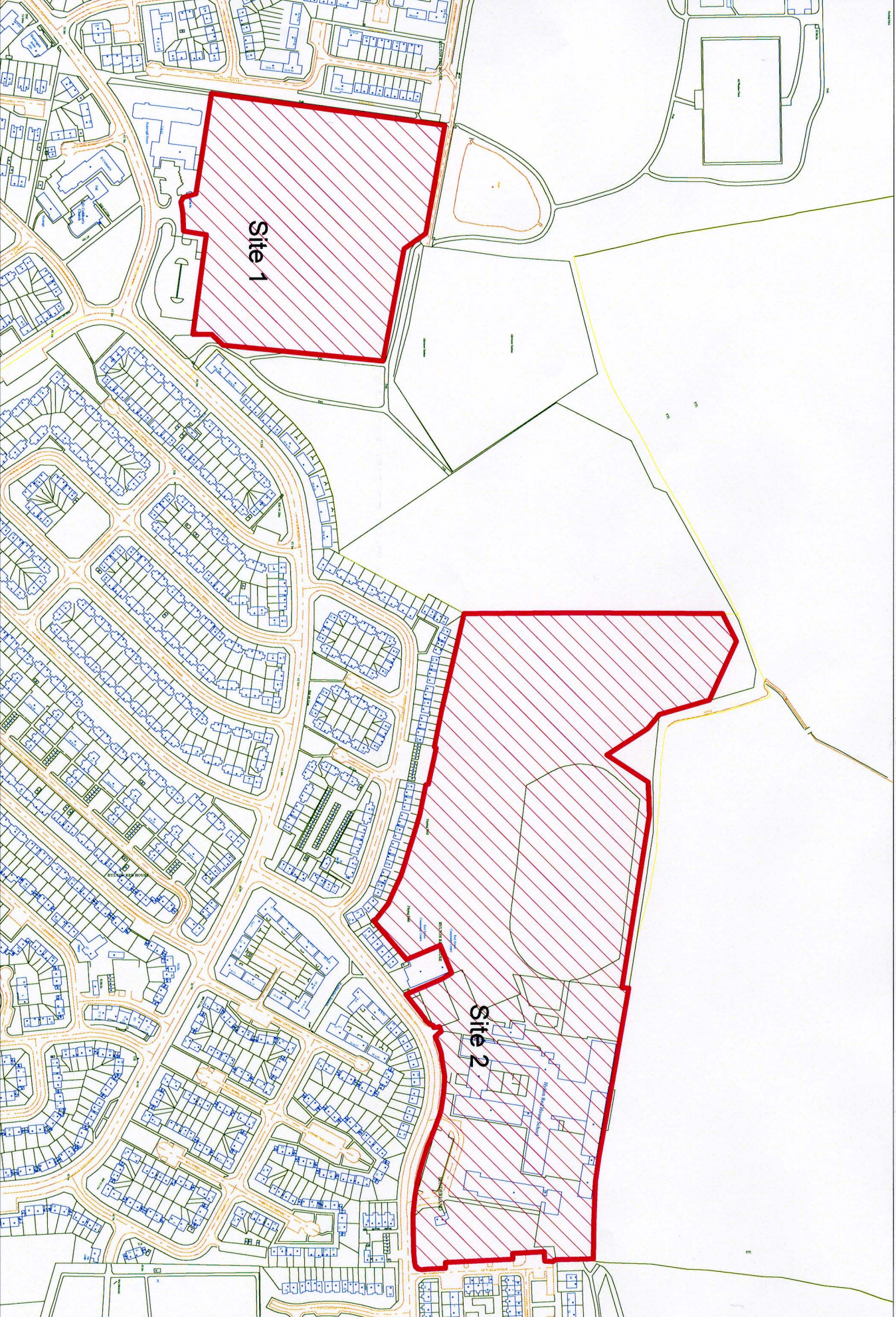
# HYLTON RED HOUSE/WILLOW FIELDS



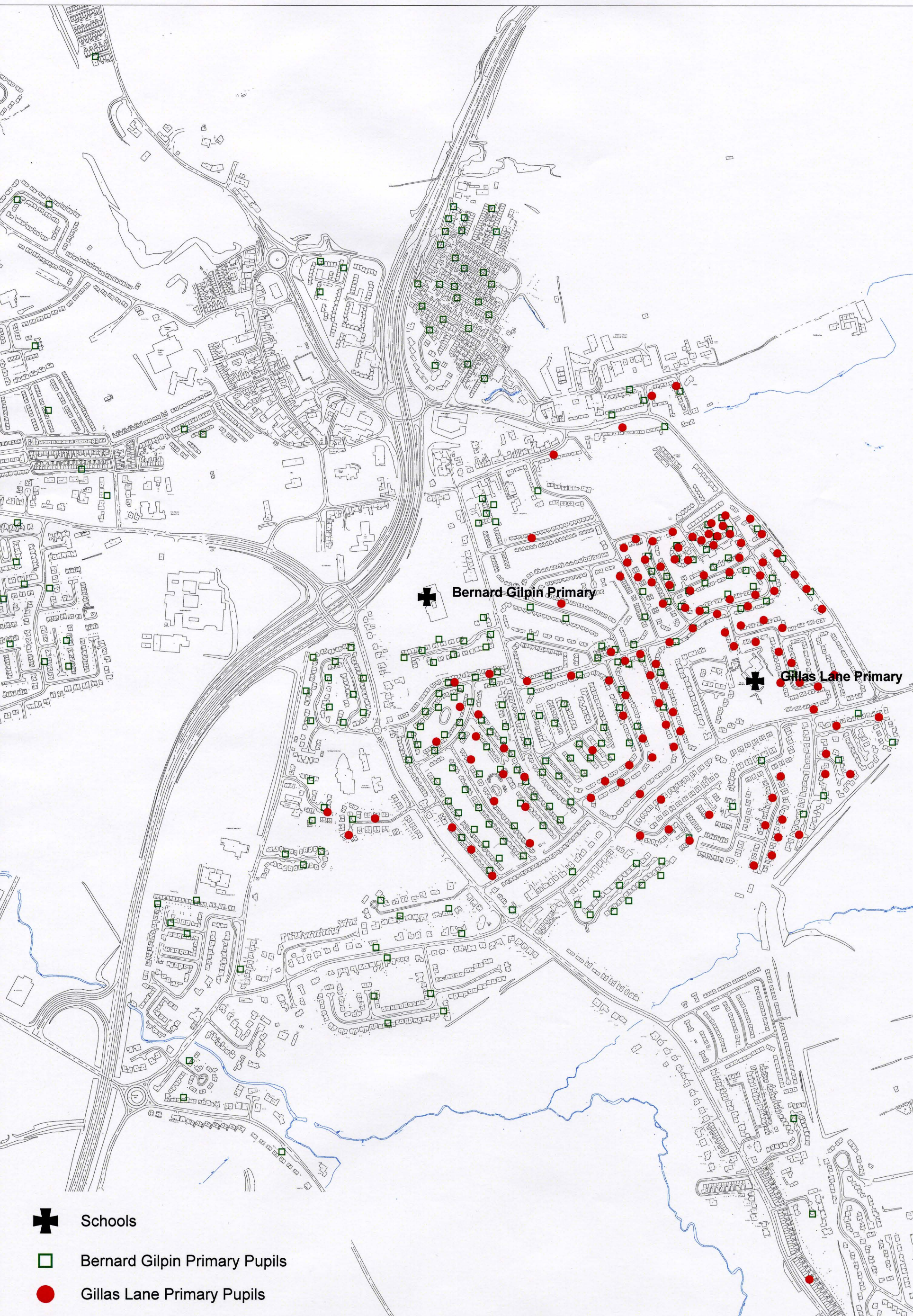
- Schools
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Willow Fields Primary

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**POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW SCHOOL IN HYLTON RED HOUSE AREA**



# BERNARD GILPIN/GILLAS LANE



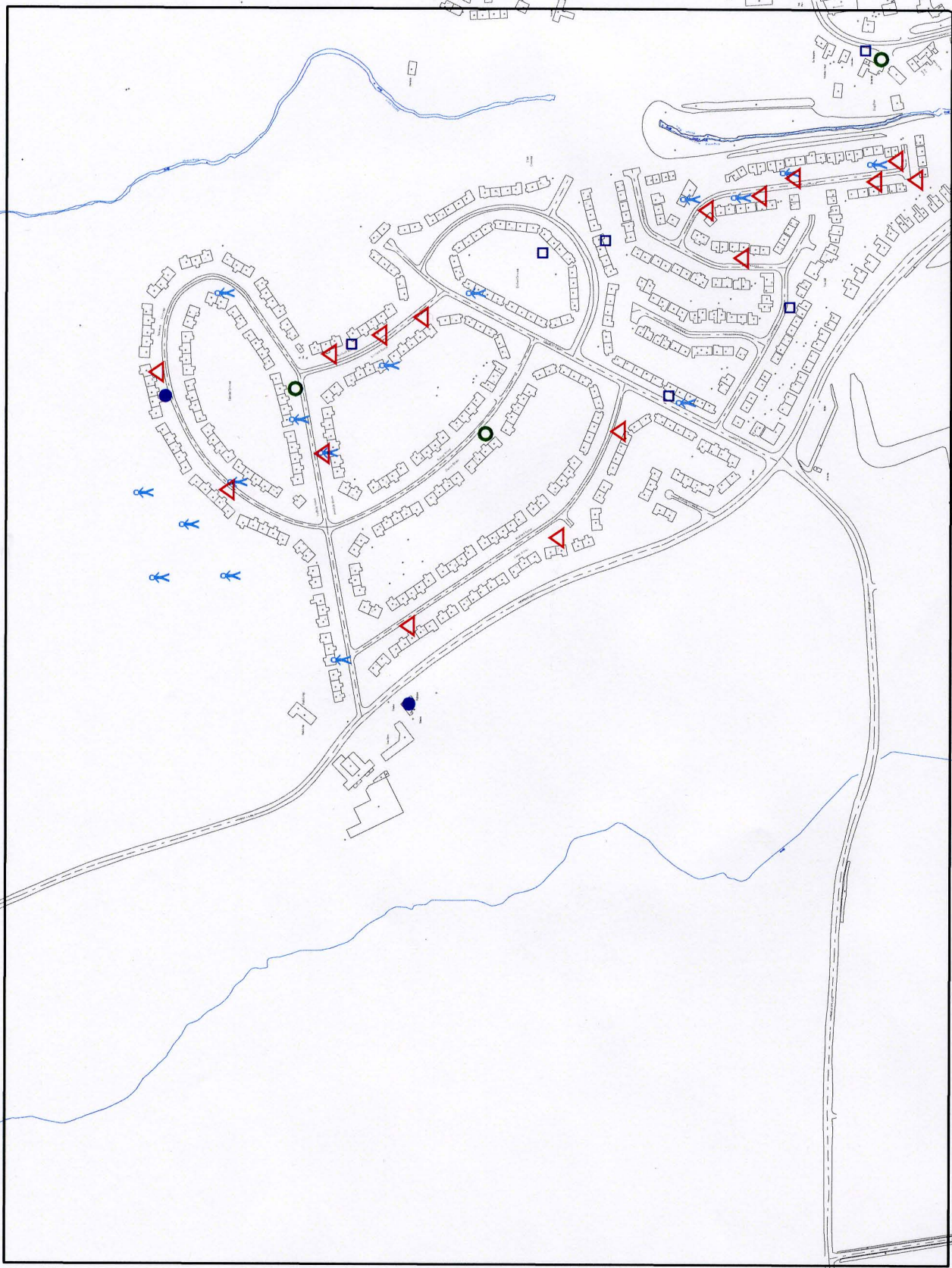
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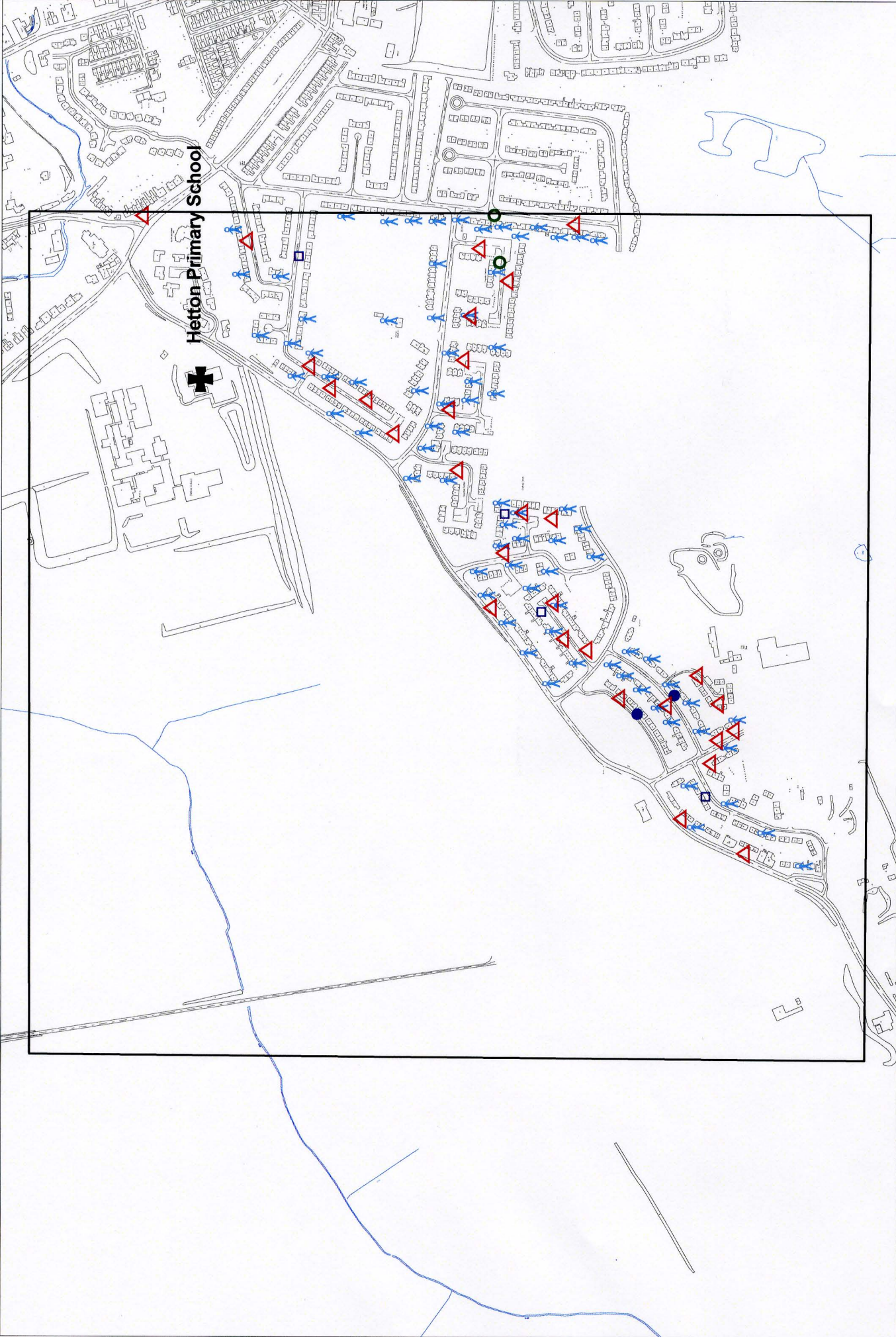
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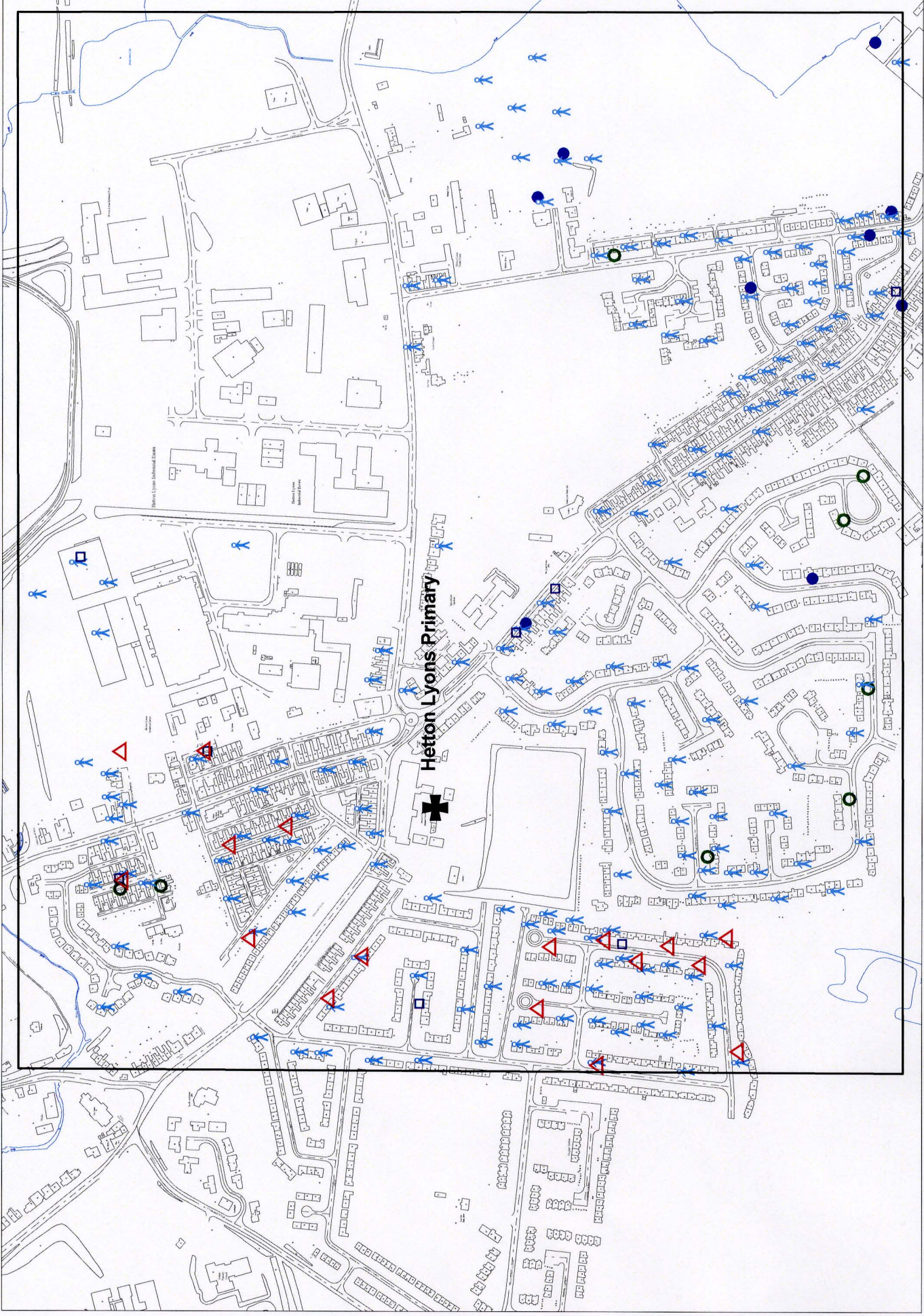


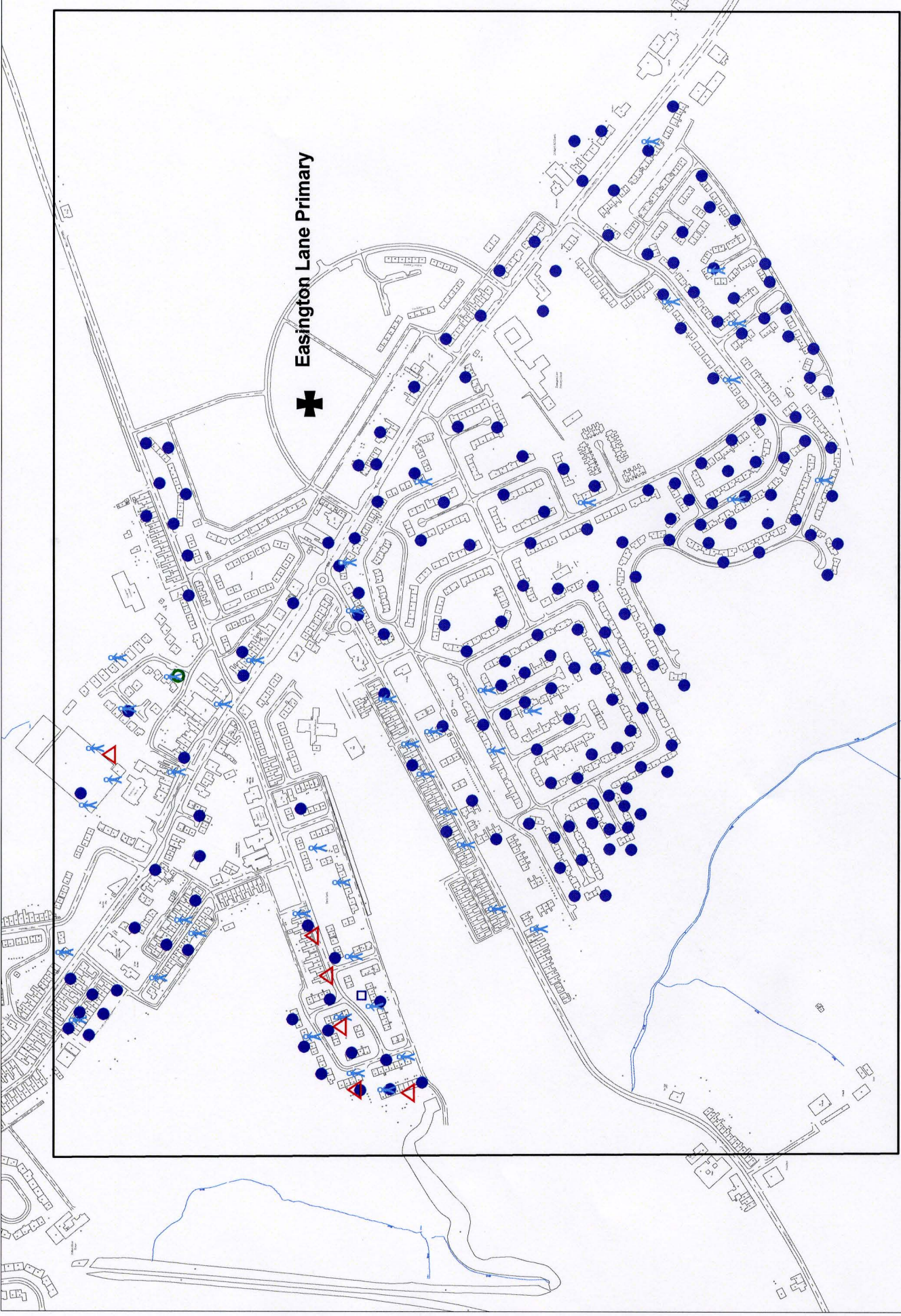
HETTON CLUSTER AREA 1



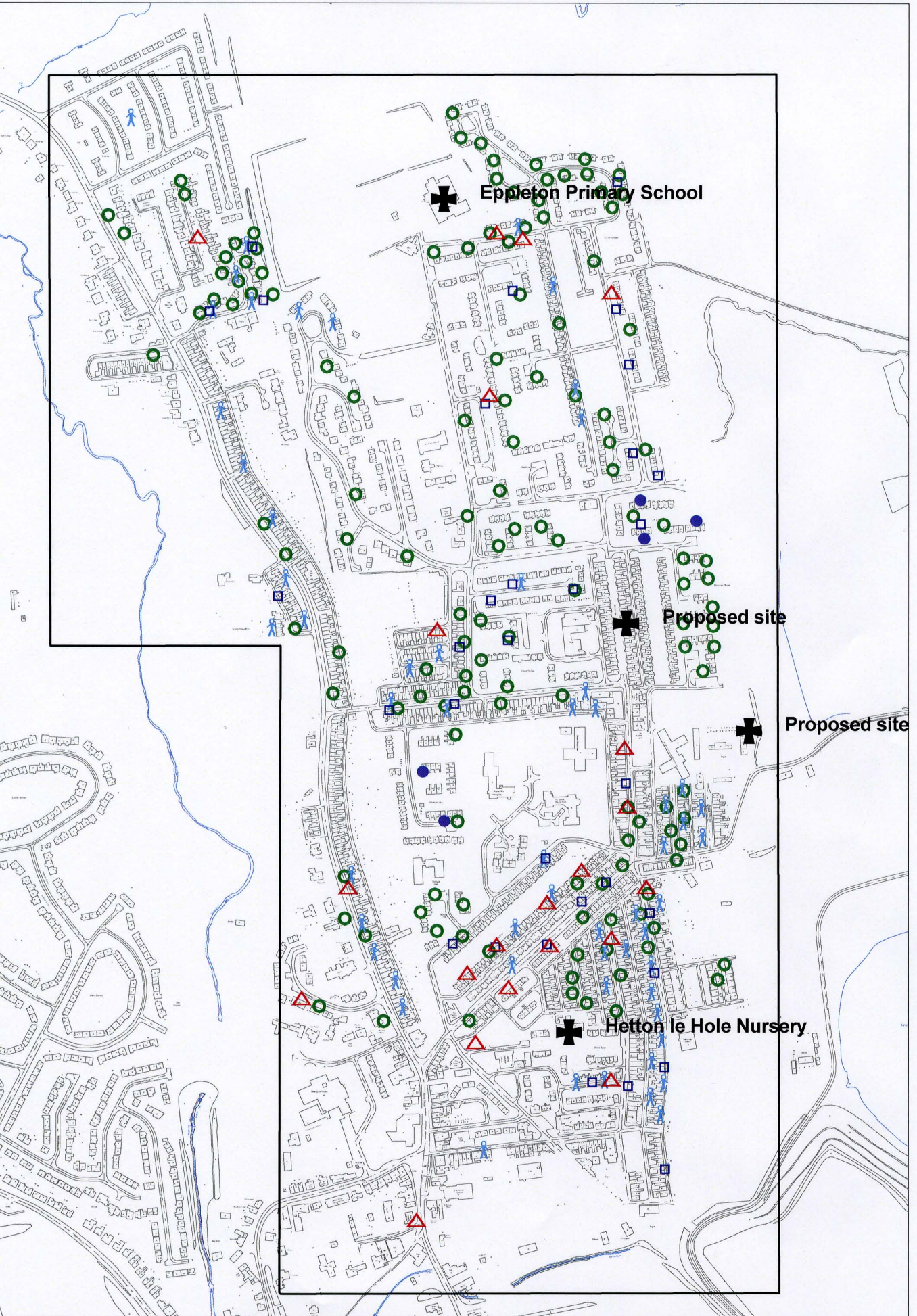


HETTON CLUSTER AREA 3

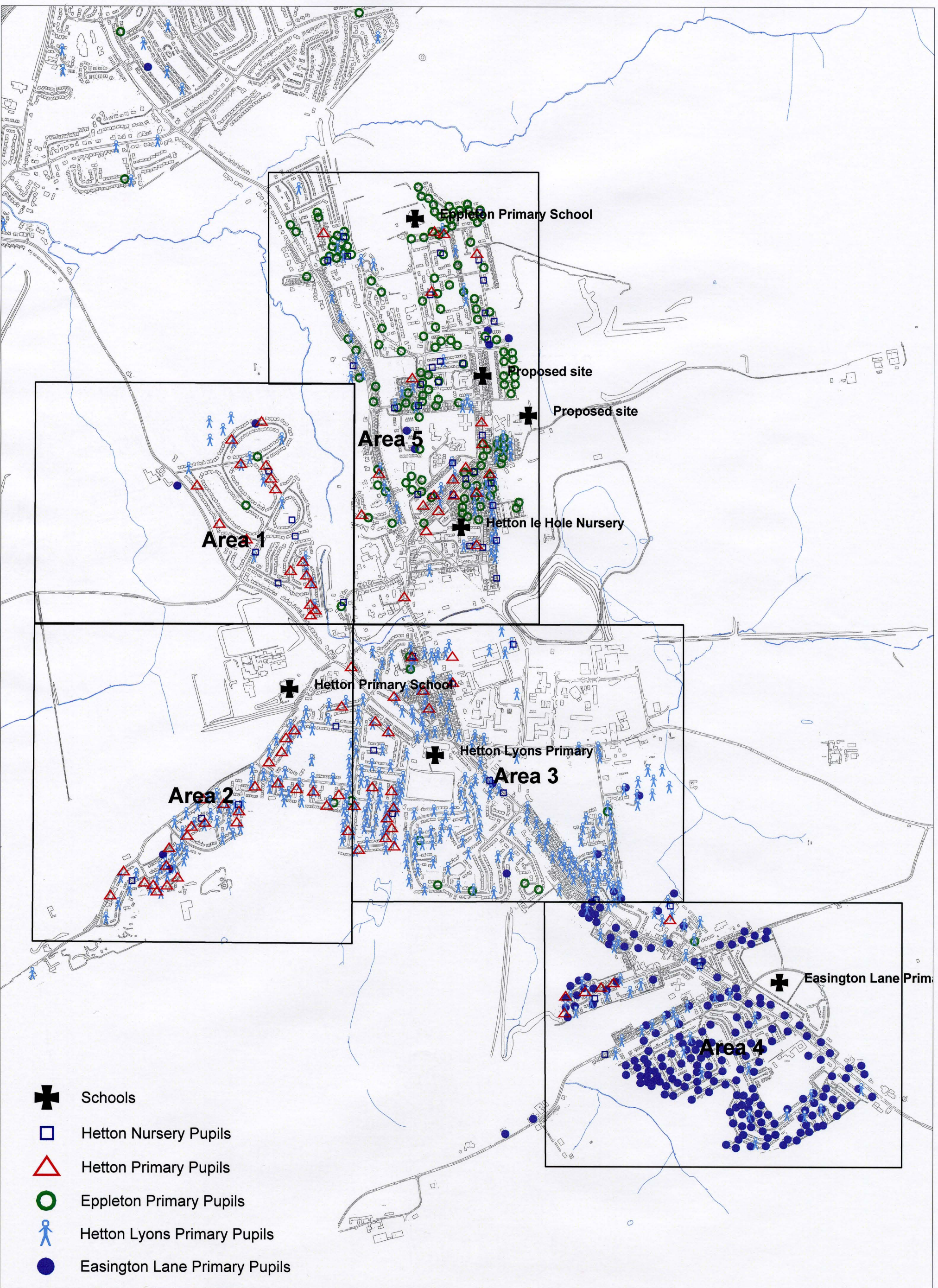




# HETTON CLUSTER AREA 5

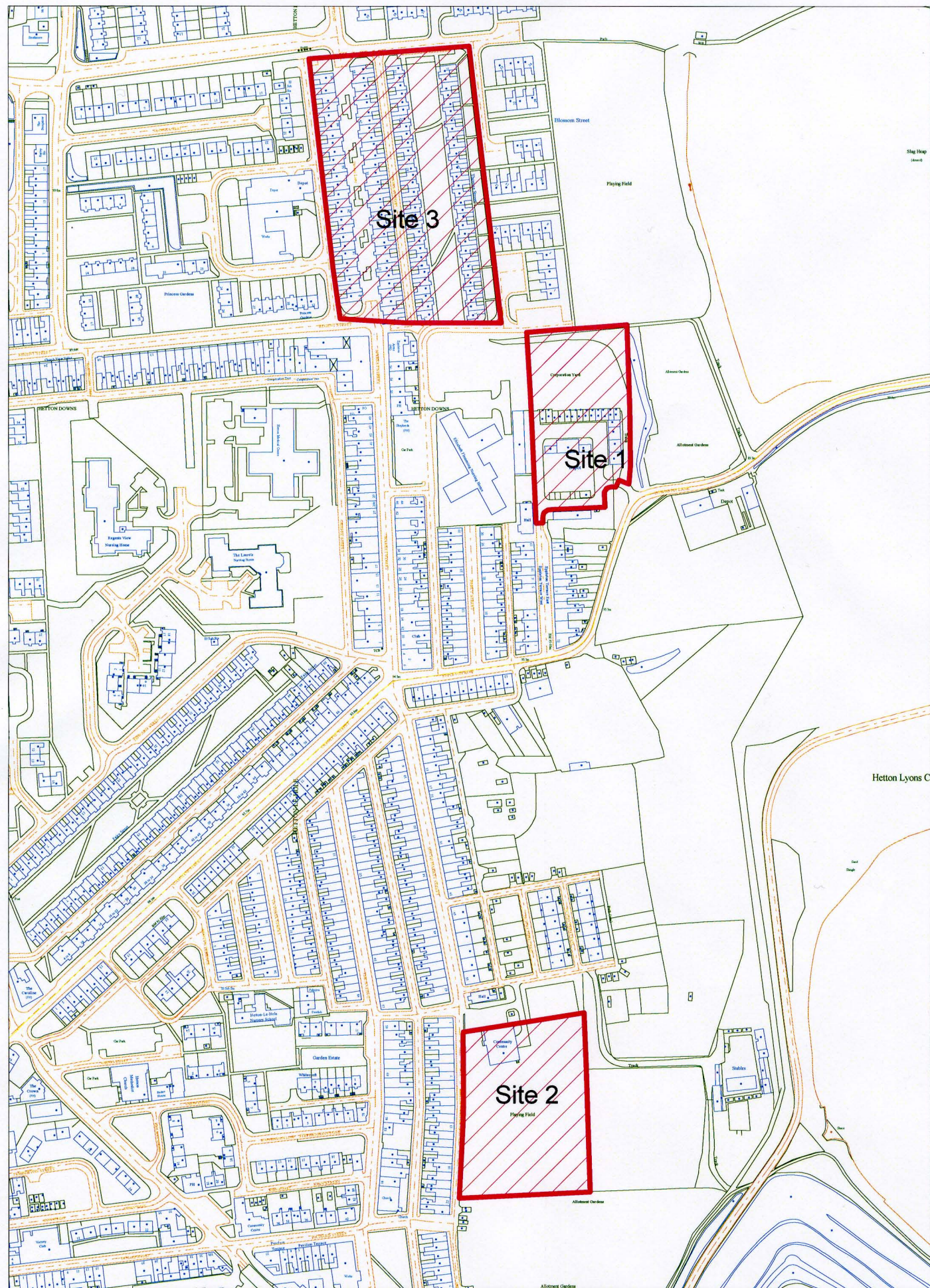


# HETTON CLUSTER AREAS



-  Schools
-  Hetton Nursery Pupils
-  Hetton Primary Pupils
-  Eppleton Primary Pupils
-  Hetton Lyons Primary Pupils
-  Easington Lane Primary Pupils

# POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW SCHOOL IN HETTON/EPPLETON AREA



## Appendix 5

SCHOOLS	January 2009 (Actual)											September 2009 (provisional)			
	Net Cap	4+	5+	6+	7+	8+	9+	10+	NOR	Surplus	% Surplus	Rec Nos (as at 24/3/09)	NOR	Surplus	% Surplus
BERNARD GILPIN PRIMARY	350	37	37	31	57	34	45	48	289	61	17%	33	274	76	22%
GILLAS LANE PRIMARY	210	19	21	20	19	23	14	19	135	75	36%	19	135	75	36%
EPPLETON PRIMARY	199	22	16	24	19	32	27	26	166	33	17%	24	164	35	18%
HETTON PRIMARY	151	15	16	13	9	13	20	16	102	49	32%	17	103	48	32%
HYLTON RED HOUSE PRIMARY	427	54	59	41	52	60	51	61	378	49	11%	60	377	50	12%
WILLOW FIELDS PRIMARY	154	13	17	13	17	25	17	17	119	35	23%	7	109	45	29%
BEXHILL PRIMARY	336	44	34	29	44	48	48	36	283	53	16%	29	276	60	18%
TOWN END PRIMARY	210	29	23	29	22	29	30	27	189	21	10%	27	189	21	10%