

Appendix 3 (vii)

Dear Helen

On behalf of the governing body of Thornhill I wish to express formal objection to the published proposal by the governors of Houghton Kepier Sports College to establish the school's own on-site 6th Form provision.

The proposal is counter to the expressed wishes of the partnership of secondary schools in Sunderland, the EIP and the Sunderland Partnership 14-19 action plan. As you are aware much effort and energy was expended in developing, and having accepted by DCSF the 'Sunderland model' of 11-16 and 5-16 academies. That model specifically excluded post 16 on-site school provision to allow the academies the capacity to participate in the successful joint 6th Forms established in recent years.

There is an important question relating to the educational validity of small 6th Forms which governors here do not believe has been answered satisfactorily by the Houghton Kepier proposal. The curriculum offer already available within existing joint provision and that proposed by the Headways development is far superior in all aspects to the necessarily limited range a small school based 6th Form could realistically offer. It is likely that any students attending such a small 6th Form would have reduced prospects imposed by these limitations and therefore diminishes opportunities for young people rather than extending them.

This appears to have been recognised by another 11-16 school in the city which had previously harboured intentions of establishing their own on-site 6th Form but which has now formally approached one of the joint 6th Forms with a request to become a full partner. This option remains open to Houghton Kepier and would result in students continuing to benefit from the extensive opportunities the joint arrangements already provide. Many ex-Houghton Kepier students are currently studying very successfully in the existing 6th Forms across the city and it is interesting and important to note the continuing improvement in standards achieved through the joint provisions.

There also appears to be risk of resource dilution from one sector, 11 -16, into post 16 provision. This threatens the learning experiences for 11 - 16 students, a threat which is unnecessary as there is ample high quality post 16 provision with the capacity to cater for all in the city's 16 - 19 students already existant.

As the local authority is becoming the commissioning agent for post 16 provision under the changes to the machinery of government governors at Thornhill are puzzled as to the expectations of Houghton Kepier school in relation to such commissioning. Given that the Houghton Kepier proposal is outwith Childrens Services' vision and planning for post 16 education opportunities across the city who do they expect to commission the service they propose to offer? It would appear that there can be no economic viability associated with the Houghton Kepier proposal in the absence of a commissioning pledge.

Thornhill urges Houghton Keping governors to recognise the undoubted benefit of the joint 6th Form arrangements and again support the open invitation for them to become full partners in one of the established joint 6th Forms.

Yours sincerely

J Hallworth