

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL

Insert the information asked for in the expandable box below each section.

Contact details

1. The name of the local education authority or governing body publishing the proposals, and a contact address, and the name of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued.

Sunderland City Council

PO Box 101

Civic Centre

Sunderland

SR2 7DN

Gillas Lane Primary School

Seaton Avenue

Houghton

DH5 8EH

Implementation

2. The date when it is planned that the proposals will be implemented, or where the proposals are to be implemented in stages, information about each stage and the date on which each stage is planned to be implemented.

31 August 2012

Consultation

3. A statement to the effect that all applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with.

All applicable statutory requirements in relation to the proposals to consult were complied with.

4. Evidence of the consultation before the proposals were published including—

- (a) a list of persons and/or parties who were consulted;
- (b) minutes of all public consultation meetings;
- (c) the views of the persons consulted; and
- (d) copies of all consultation documents and a statement of how these were made available.

- (a) Headteachers, staff and governors of Gillas Lane and Bernard Gilpin Primary Schools
Families of pupils at the schools
Pupils at the schools
Ward Members
Teaching and non-teaching unions
Diocese of Durham
Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Early Years Childcare Strategic Partnership
Member of Parliament for Houghton and Washington East
Hetton Town Council
- (b) Four stages of consultation carried out. Minutes of public consultation meetings on options held in October 2008 are available and minutes of public consultation meetings on proposals held in February 2009 are attached.
- (c) Responses to the consultation held in October 2008 are available and responses to consultation meetings held in February 2009 are attached.
- (d) Copies of the consultation documents are attached. These were sent out to all concerned and they were also made available on the council's website.

Objectives

- 5. The objectives of the proposal.

Across Sunderland City Council 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. Gillas Lane Primary School had a surplus of 36% and Bernard Gilpin Primary School had a surplus of 17% in January 2009. The projections up to 2013 show that the surplus position between the two schools will continue to rise if no action is taken. The objective of the proposal is to address the significant number of surplus places in the two schools whilst maintaining and improving attainment. The closure of Gillas Lane Primary School would result in the net removal of 140 school places across the two schools.

Standards and Diversity

- 6. A statement and supporting evidence indicating how the proposals will impact on the standards, diversity and quality of education in the area.

The proposal to discontinue Gillas Lane Primary School and designate Bernard Gilpin Primary School as the receiving school will impact on standards by reducing the risk of underperformance due to falling rolls in the area, and the subsequent reduction in budgets. Both Gillas Lane Primary School and Bernard Gilpin Primary School are each operating with numbers of children well below the capacity of the schools and as such are having to maintain buildings, with associated costs, bigger than are needed for the pupil numbers. Bernard Gilpin will receive increased budget to reflect the increase in pupil numbers and will benefit from the increased economies of scale that the additional funding will bring. The flexibility afforded by the increased resources will further support driving up standards.

The proposal will not impact negatively on the diversity of education in the area.

Provision for 16 -19 year olds

7. Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, how the proposals will impact on—

- (a) the educational or training achievements;
- (b) participation in education or training; and
- (c) the range of educational or training opportunities,

for 16-19 year olds in the area.

N/A

Need for places

8. A statement and supporting evidence about the need for places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

Bernard Gilpin School currently has a Net Capacity of 350 and a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 50. In September 2009 the school is expected to have a surplus of 22% (76 places).

Bernard Gilpin school was built 15 years ago as a 2 form entry primary school. As the school roll has declined the net capacity has been realigned. Some remodelling will be carried out to reinstate the school to 2 form entry. The total in each year group for both schools added together is currently less than 60 pupils in every year group except for current year 3 which has 76 pupils. That year group will leave in July 2012, therefore if pupils transfer from Gillas Lane to Bernard Gilpin in September 2012 there will be no more than 60 pupils in each year group.

Gillas Lane nursery class has planned places for 26 PTE 3 year olds for three terms and 9 PTE 2 year olds for a maximum of two terms. The January 2009 census shows the nursery class had 16 x 3 year olds and 7 x 2 year olds. Houghton Nursery School has sufficient capacity to accommodate these numbers.

9. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

N/A

Current School Information

10. Information as to the numbers, age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is made at the school.

Gillas Lane Primary School is a mixed community school which caters for pupils aged 3 – 11 with a Net Capacity of 210 and nursery provision for 13 FTE pupils aged 3 and 9 PTE places for pupils aged 2. The Annual Schools Census in January 2009 recorded 135 pupils aged 4 – 11 and 23 part-time nursery aged pupils.

The Annual Schools Census in January 2009 recorded 48 pupils on the register of SEN and no pupils with statements of SEN.

Displaced Pupils

11. Details of the schools or further education colleges which pupils at the school for whom provision is to be discontinued will be offered places, including—

- (a) any interim arrangements;
- (b) where the school included provision that is recognised by the local education authority as reserved for children with special educational needs, the alternative provision to be made for pupils in the school's reserved provision; and
- (c) in the case of special schools, alternative provision made by local education authorities other than the authority which maintains the school.

It is proposed that, excepting nursery pupils, pupils attending Gillas Lane Primary School at the point of closure will transfer to Bernard Gilpin Primary School with effect from 1 September 2012. Nursery pupils will go to Houghton le Spring Community Nursery School.

Parents would still have the right to apply for places at other schools.

12. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or further education college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

Bernard Gilpin school sits on a large site and was built 15 years ago as a 2 form entry primary school. As the school roll has declined the net capacity has been realigned. Some remodelling will be carried out to reinstate the school to 2 form entry.

Impact on the Community

13. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

Gillas Lane Primary School is not used by outside groups for community activities. There are dedicated community facilities available within the area. More pupils from the area attend Bernard Gilpin school than attend Gillas Lane therefore there are already strong links between the community and Bernard Gilpin school.

14. Details of extended services the school offered and what it is proposed for these services once the school has discontinued.

Gillas Lane Primary School offers a Breakfast Club, After School Club and Family Learning.

Bernard Gilpin Primary School currently offers an After School Club, Community Access Facilities and a Parents Room. The school has links with Houghton Nursery School for provision of breakfast club and after school facilities.

Houghton Nursery School offers wraparound childcare to 3 and 4 year olds and also delivers the 3 and 4 year old offer flexibly.

Travel

15. Details of length and journeys to alternative provision.

Of the pupils at Gillas Lane Primary School, 65% live closer to Bernard Gilpin Primary School, 35% will have their journeys increased by up to 0.5 mile.

16. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how they will help to work against increased car use.

There are no proposals to provide transport for the displaced pupils as Bernard Gilpin Primary School is less than 0.5 of a mile from Gillas Lane Primary School. As most pupils live nearer to Bernard Gilpin school and no pupil will travel more than an additional 0.5 mile, it is anticipated that there will be no increase in car usage.

Related Proposals.

17. A statement as to whether in the opinion of the local education authority or governing body, the proposals are related to any other proposals which may have been, are, or are about to be published.

This proposal is not related to any other proposals which may have been, are, or are about to be published.

Rural Primary Schools

18. Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15 of the EIA 2006, a statement that the local education authority or the governing body (as the case may be) considered—

- (a) the likely effect of discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- (b) the availability, and likely cost to the local education authority, of transport to other schools;
- (c) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- (d) any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school,

as required by section 15(4) of the EIA 2006.

N/A

Maintained nursery schools

19. Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out—

- (a) the consideration that has been given to developing the school into a children's centre and the grounds for not doing so;
- (b) the local education authority's assessment of the quality and quantity of the alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- (c) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

N/A

Special educational provision

20. Where existing provision for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the local education authority or the governing body believes the proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

The local authority believes the proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for the children with SEN currently at Gillas Lane Primary School, for the following reasons:

The discontinuance of Gillas Lane Primary School and the transfer of pupils to Bernard Gilpin Primary School is likely to lead to improvements in the standard and quality of educational provision for pupils with special educational needs because the budget at Bernard Gilpin school will be increased, affording the school both greater stability and flexibility to respond to the needs of pupils with SEN.

There will be greater scope to employ specialist support staff and for staff training in the various specialisms. The stronger financial position will enable the school to plan their whole school SEN provision with more certainty and to build on their good practice of targeting early intervention where a pupil's needs are identified, and developing individualised learning packages.

The increase in staffing across the school will also give staff the opportunity to develop their specialisms and to build on their expertise in differentiating their specific curriculum areas to meet individual's needs.

The design of the building and site layout at Gillas Lane Primary School presents some access difficulties in terms of ingress and egress and the internal layout. Bernard Gilpin School is fully accessible for ingress and egress and internally.

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT GILLAS LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL – 6.00 pm, Monday 23rd 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
- Willow Fields Primary
- Hylton Red House Primary
- Hylton Red House Nursery
- Southwick Primary
- Grange Park Primary
- Bexhill Primary
- 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 comes 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 PARENTS/CARERS STAGE 4 CONSULTATION MEETING HELD AT BERNARD GILPIN PRIMARY SCHOOL – 6.00 pm, Monday 23rd 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
• Total	206

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
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 xxxx, 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 23rd 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 countrywide) 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 offer 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 Epleton 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 a 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 it 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. It 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

Maria

Snowy

Dani

Abigail

David

Clayton

Michael

Sam

Malcolm

Amy

Alex

Levi

Dylan

Craig

Emily

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 Leah

Ellie
Mackenzie

Ollie
Elly

Elise
Anthony

Rebecca

Daniel

Braley
Emma

Bethany

Aisha

Chantelle

Abbi

Thomas

Jamie

Henry

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. 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 23rd 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 (19th/20th 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

	Gillas Lane Grade Attained	Bernard Gilpin Grade Attained
Overall effectiveness of the school	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	Satisfactory (3)	Good (2)
Achievement and standards	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
Personal development and well-being	Good (2)	Good (2)
Quality of provision Teaching and learning	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
Curriculum and other activities	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
Care, guidance and support	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)
Leadership and management	Good (2)	Satisfactory (3)

**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

Proposals for Primary Schools in the
North and Coalfields areas

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Published Admission Number (PAN)

the maximum number of pupils that can be admitted into a particular year group.

Net Capacity

the number of pupils a school could accommodate based on teaching space available.

Hylton Red House Cluster - Hylton Red House Nursery School, Hylton Red House Primary School and Willow Fields Community Primary School

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.

Castle View Cluster - Bexhill Primary School, Town End Primary School

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.

Monkwearmouth Cluster - Dame Dorothy Primary School, Redby Primary School , Seaburn Dene Primary School, Grange Park Primary School

Implement the PAN reductions and re-model 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 the Primary Strategy for Change.

Houghton Kepier Cluster – Bernard Gilpin Primary School, Gillas Lane Primary School

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 – Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School, Hetton Primary School, Eppleton Primary School

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.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Consultation meetings are being held as follows:-

SCHOOL	DATE AND TIME	VENUE
Bernard Gilpin Primary School	23 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Bernard Gilpin Primary School, Hall Lane, Houghton
Gillas Lane Primary School	23 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Gillas Lane Primary School, Seaton Avenue, Houghton
Bexhill Primary School	23 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Bexhill Primary School, Bexhill Road, Town End Farm
Willow Fields Community Primary School	24 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Willow Fields Community Primary School, Winslow Close, Witherwack
Hylton Red House Primary School (parents and governors of children at Hylton Red House Nursery School should also attend this meeting)	24 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Hylton Red House Primary School, Rotherham Road, Red House Estate
Town End Primary School	24 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Town End Primary School, Borodin Avenue, Town End Farm
Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School	25 February 2009 2.30pm Governors 3.30pm Staff 5.00pm Parents	Hetton-le-Hole Nursery School, Victoria Street, Hetton
Hetton Primary School	26 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Hetton Primary School, Moorsley Road, Hetton
Eppleton Primary School	26 February 2009 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Eppleton Primary School, Church Road, Hetton

School Place Planning for the Future

Options for consultation October/November 2008

EXPLANATION OF TERMS:

Published Admission Number (PAN):

the maximum number of pupils who can be admitted into a particular year group

Net Capacity:

the number of pupils a school could accommodate based on teaching space available

Number on Roll (NGR):

the number of pupils actually on a school's roll

Surplus:

the difference between the net capacity and the number on roll

North Area options

HYLTON RED HOUSE CLUSTER

Predicted surplus place position by 2013 if no action is taken:

School	Number of Surplus places	Percentage surplus places
Bishop Harland CE	18	9%
Hylton Red House	40	9%
Southwick	32	10%
Willow Fields	62	40%
Total in cluster	152	14%

PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REDUCING SURPLUS PLACES

Bishop Harland C of E Primary School:

No proposed changes

Hylton Red House Primary/Southwick Primary/Willow Fields Community Primary Schools/Hylton Red House Nursery:

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.

CASTLE VIEW CLUSTER

Predicted surplus place position by 2013 if no action is taken:

School	Number of Surplus places	Percentage surplus places
Bexhill	102	30%
Castletown	88	23%
Hylton Castle	165	40%
Town End	26	12%
Total in cluster	381	28%

PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REDUCING SURPLUS PLACES

Hylton Castle Primary School

Initial re-modelling of accommodation to re-align net capacity within existing Published Admission Number (PAN). Reduce PAN to 30 in 2012/13 and further re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.

Castletown Primary School

Reduce PAN to 45 and re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity. Keep under review pending housing regeneration plans for the area.

Bexhill Primary School/Town End Primary School

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 Farm as receiving school in new building. Increase PAN to 60.

Option 4:

- Close Town End Farm Primary and name Bexhill as the receiving school in new building. Increase PAN to 60.

MONKWEARMOUTH CLUSTER

Predicted surplus place position by 2013 if no action is taken:

School	Number of Surplus places	Percentage surplus places
Dame Dorothy	53	25%
Fulwell Infant	57	21%
Fulwell Junior	54	15%
Grange Park	98	39%
Redby	124	29%
Seaburn Dene	161	51%
Total in cluster	547	30%

PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REDUCING SURPLUS PLACES

Dame Dorothy Primary School

Option 1:

- Review PAN and realign net capacity to reflect impact if Option 2 adopted for Grange Park

Option 2:

- Reduce PAN from 30 to 25 and re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity.

Fulwell infant School

- No proposed changes.

Fulwell Junior School

- Reduce PAN to 90 and keep under review.

Grange Park Primary School

Option 1:

- Re-model accommodation to re-align net capacity with existing PAN.

Option 2:

- Close Grange Park Primary and name Dame Dorothy Primary, Redby Primary and Southwick Primary as receiving schools.

Redby Primary School

Option 1:

- Re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity with the existing PAN if Option 2 for Grange Park is adopted

Option 2:

- Reduce PAN to 45 and re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity.

Seaburn Dene Primary School

- Reduce PAN to 25 and re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity.

Houghton/Hetton Area options:

HOUGHTON KEPIER CLUSTER

Predicted surplus place position by 2013 if no action is taken:

School	Number of Surplus places	Percentage surplus places
Bernard Gilpin	88	25%
Burnside	59	28%
Dubmire	36	9%
East Rainton	24	18%
Gillas Lane	63	30%
Newbottle	31	7%
Shiney Row	22	7%
Total in cluster	323	16%

PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REDUCING SURPLUS PLACES

Bernard Gilpin Primary School/Gillas Lane Primary School

Option 1:

- Close Gillas Lane Primary and name Bernard Gilpin Primary as 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.

Burnside Primary School

Option 1:

- Reduce PAN from 30 to 25 and re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity.

Option 2:

- Keep under review in light of housing regeneration in the area.

Dubmire Primary School

- No proposed changes. To be kept under review.

East Rainton Primary School

- Reduce PAN to 15 and re-model accommodation to re-align the net capacity.

Newbottle Primary School

- No proposed changes. To be kept under review.

Shiney Row Primary School

- No proposed changes. To be kept under review.

HETTON CLUSTER

Predicted surplus place position by 2013 if no action is taken:

School	Number of Surplus places	Percentage surplus places
Easington Lane	1	0%
Eppleton	73	37%
Hetton Lyons	2	0%
Hetton	43	28%
Total in cluster	119	11%

PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR REDUCING SURPLUS PLACES

Easington Lane Primary School

- Align the net capacity with the Published Admission Number (PAN) as large year groups, move out of school.

Hetton Lyons Primary School

- Align the net capacity with the PAN as large year groups, move out of school.

Eppleton Primary School / Hetton Primary School

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 Nursey 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

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Consultation meetings are being held as follows:

School	Date and time	Venue
Bernard Gilpin Primary School	20 October 2008 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Bernard Gilpin Primary School, Hall Lane, Houghton
Gillas Lane Primary School	20 October 2008 3.30pm Staff 4.30pm Governors 6.00pm Parents	Gillas Lane Primary School, Seaton Avenue, Houghton
Southwick Primary School	20 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Southwick Community Centre, Southwick Road
Willow Fields Primary School	21 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Willow Fields Primary School, Winslow Close, Witherwack
Hylton Red House Primary School (parents/governors of children at Hylton Red House Nursery School should attend this meeting)	21 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Hylton Red House Primary School, Rotherham Road
Grange Park Primary School	22 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Grange Park Primary School, Swan Street, Sunderland
Town End Farm Primary School	22 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Town End Farm Primary School, Borodin Avenue, Town End Farm
Bexhill Primary School	23 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Bexhill Primary School, Bexhill Road, Sunderland
Eppleton Primary School	23 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Eppleton Primary School, Church Road, Hetton
Hetton Primary School (parents/governors of children at Hetton Nursery School should attend this meeting)	23 October 2008 3.30pm Governors 4.30pm Staff 6.00pm Parents	Hetton Primary School, Moorsley Road, Hetton