

**Secondary School Review – West Gateshead  
Consultation meeting**

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**Meeting:** Governors' consultation

**Date/Time:** Tuesday 13 July at 5.00pm

**Venue:** Ryton Comprehensive School

**Present:**

<b>Cllr A Douglas</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder for Housing</b>
<b>Margaret Whellans</b>	<b>Group Director Learning &amp; Children</b>
<b>David Mitchell</b>	<b>Director Learning and Schools</b>
<b>Peter Crabtree</b>	<b>Headteacher Hookergate School</b>
<b>Steve Williamson</b>	<b>Headteacher Ryton School</b>
<b>Adrian Hinchcliffe</b>	<b>Chair of Governors Ryton School</b>
<b>Paul Carvin</b>	<b>Head of Raising Achievement Service</b>
<b>Sandra Punton</b>	<b>School Organisation and Development Manager</b>
<b>Sandra Hewson</b>	<b>Senior HR Adviser</b>
<b>Dilys Cowper</b>	<b>Financial Support Services Manager</b>
<b>Anita Dowson</b>	<b>Note taker</b>

**Attendance: 23**

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Adrian Hinchcliffe, Chair of Governors, opened the meeting and updated on how things progress to this stage and where things stand currently and reminded those present of what has happened over the past year to get to this stage.

Introductions were made by representatives from the Local Authority.

David Mitchell gave an overview on progress since informal consultation in 2009 and highlighted issues regarding recent announcements by Government indicating that BSF projects in Gateshead have been suspended.

The following questions and comments were raised during the meeting. **However, the meeting was unofficially attended by representatives from a primary school governing body and the following comments are therefore not wholly representative of Ryton Comprehensive Governing body: -**

- A new school has been mentioned but there is a need to be careful how this is described to parents should be Ryton School on a new site not a new school.
- Have been very encouraged in the course of the year in the process but also in the mindset regarding the new identify between school and new school building. The issue of identify and prospect of ownership

on the part of students is a critical aspect. In light of Government news whether there is a new build or not, a new identity must be in place before day 1 especially due to good progress already being made.

- As a Ward Councillor feel aggrieved for not having been part of the process. Local residents have found the matter distressing and there is a lack of knowledge, some residents have no idea of the proposals for the site. The community must not be excluded, the school is a central part of the community and there is a great deal of concern. People are asking why the process is continuing now that BSF has been stopped. Many rumours are circulating about land sale.
- Need to take into account tissue of community awareness. People will want to know about planning process.
- Is shutting Hookergate the right thing to do. There is dismay in the closure of Ryton's sister school. Could Hookergate be turned around and kept open.
- Concern regarding plan B and the change of Government must have seen this coming. What contingency plans are in place to manage what has happened. Hookergate parents are unhappy with what they have been offered they would like to have a choice.
- Concern that there is still one unyielding vision from the Council. Council said we must make this work and that there is no flexibility on the new school on a new site. Vision fails if there is no money how will that be managed?
- Realistically if the full amount is not offered why invest in a new site when have a site and 25% could be saved and have a State of the Art school on the current site which would be better value for money. Why was this site not considered?
- Local community are horrified that this site is not being redeveloped.
- People near existing site bought houses with the knowledge that there is a school there. Will take a long time for a new school to settle down and be welcomed. It would be cheaper to refurbish. Need to be told that new site is better because.....Don't want a second class site, could build at Ryton and retain current new buildings. Feel need to be convinced why a new site is needed.
- The two communities have sensitivities. Need to determine the best site which would be tenable for both schools and both communities.
- The proposed site and existing sites are the wrong side of the bypass for Hookergate. Dreadful place to cross at new site.

- There hasn't been chance to get parents and students mixed and there is a clear need to do that but there isn't time to do so before September. Governing body want to work with both communities and it is important to achieve this and get parents to come and look at the school to see what is on offer and this needs to be done as soon as possible.
- Timing of consultation meetings last year and the current ones are held at a late stage in the year to be able to get parents together. It would be better if kids could have got together before September which could have been a possibility if consultation meetings had been held earlier.
- Feel as though still in the same position even though a year has passed.
- Would feel uncomfortable as a governor pressing for money for new build when other schools are in need of refurbishment.
- New school building would open opportunities for wheelchair access and would be a fully accessible school offering improvement for children's welfare.
- Would like to applaud the work done by the Steering Group and preparing the transition plan. Best plan has been developed to give all pupils the best chance. There are concern regarding the cost of new sites and old site would be better used. Two existing sites should have been considered when making a decision.
- What happens to site if the school is moved to a new site? What will happen to Infant and Junior schools. Governing Body of Infant and Junior haven't been invited to any meetings. Most people having seen the news have taken the assumption that meetings aren't going ahead and no literature has been available to confirm meetings will go ahead.
- Relationship with comprehensive on the campus is great. People think the drop-in meeting at 3pm won't go ahead due to what has been in the press.
- Is the plan for the transition plan to go ahead still on the cards regardless of money not being received?
- Where will extra investment come from? Hookergate aren't bringing funding with them. Extra funds will be needed for extended transition.
- Consultation paper has information regarding catchment area. Is that part of this consultation? Even if funding is delayed will it still be the same catchment?

- Council should consider redevelopment of this site. More opportunities to make Ryton carbon neutral. Ryton is a learning campus don't believe new site will give a learning campus – would urge not to move site.
- Proposed new sit is on a ridge. Breezy area and children won't want to be outside due to conditions and proximity to by-pass and junction. Pupil being killed is still in memories. Design of junction causes confusion.
- By-pass in practical terms is a fast road with a staggered junction. Barriers to overpass are narrow what will be done about these issues? One solution could be a minibus on demand in the short term. Please consider everything.
- If Council are committed to both communities the road junction should be dealt with and the traffic survey should be publicised.

Margaret Whellans thanked those present for their questions and comments and reiterated that members of the Governing Body can also send in their comments and questions using the form in the consultation documentation either individually or as a group.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm