

Meeting: Parents' Consultation

Date/Time: Tuesday 13 July at 6.30pm

Venue: Ryton Comprehensive School

Present:	Cllr A Douglas	Portfolio Holder for Housing
	Margaret Whellans	Group Director Learning & Children
	David Mitchell	Director Learning and Schools
	Peter Crabtree	Headteacher Hookergate School
	Steve Williamson	Headteacher Ryton School
	Adrian Hinchcliffe	Chair of Governors Ryton School
	Sandra Punton	School Organisation and Development Manager
	Anita Dowson	Note taker

Attendance: 50

Margaret Whellans opened the meeting and thanked those present for attending and explained the purpose of the meeting.

Margaret Whellans asked Adrian Hinchcliffe, Chair of Governors to say a few words. Adrian highlighted that he wanted to take forward the partnership between the schools and improve academic standards and have an increased offer for students from both schools, to see equality and ownership to be felt by everyone.

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 at the meeting at Ryton Comprehensive School. **However, the meeting was unofficially attended by local residents and the following comments are therefore not wholly representative of Ryton Comprehensive parents: -**

- At the last consultation meetings in 2009 options A, B, C - 89% per cent of people had gone for Option C – retain Ryton on current site. 89% is a high percentage it is felt that people's views have not been taken seriously.
- Ryton Parents' Group was set up last year regarding the implications and options raised. Can't agree to knocking down current school and

moving to another site. The Council haven't explored the benefits in terms of funding the use of the site. Site should be used not buy a new site. Offer to any other parents wishing to join the group could do so following the meeting.

- There is scepticism among community of Ryton, the Council ignore what they don't want to hear.

Landfill – didn't want it but got it;

Ryton Interchange – didn't want it but got it;

Library – didn't want it demolished – it was demolished.

How can community have faith in the Council against that record?

Consultation process just pays lip service happens across the board if something isn't wanted the community still gets it.

- Whose vision it? It is not the parents vision!
- Kingsmeadow, Lord Lawson, Cardinal Hume built on existing sites. Why can't this be done at Ryton?
- Pupils will be on Ryton site within 2 years, what is the point in moving them again shouldn't be new school here? This would be better value for money.
- Blaydon Comprehensive closed and Hookergate name etc wasn't changed. Why spend money on changing name for Ryton? Identity could be left the same and money would be saved.
- Lots of ways Hookergate pupils could be integrated at Ryton. Ryton is a very successful school, is an excellent site and has an excellent track record which has taken a long time to build up. All pupils would be made welcome at the school no matter where they come from. Building a new school doesn't make sense, should build on good things. Not listening to people and not accepting the consensus. Anyone who wants to come to this school will be welcomed.
- Sympathise with Hookergate parents. Went through similar process when Kepier Chare closed and child moved to Emmaville, child took on Emmaville uniform etc – too much is made about children not fitting in. Horrified at possible uniform change, is that going to happen? Ryton parents can't afford to buy new uniforms.
- Gateshead Unitary Development Plan states that green belt land can only be built on in extenuating circumstances and unless there is no alternative.
- After last summer 8 sites were talked about. What happened to the other 7 sites?

- What were the criteria for choosing the site?
- Think millions could be saved by selling Hookergate. Don't have a problem with change of name, there is lots of space on the current site to build new buildings.
- Have pupils been asked what they think?
- Currently on a beautiful site 3 schools communicate well sense of identity is massive.
- Option C – how far were options looked at? Had field on this site been looked at?
- Funding issue – money had come through and now has been taken away, will another bid be put in? How can buying a new site be justified millions could be saved on not buying the site.
- Spoken about bringing children together and uniform. It is people who make the school not the site why move 400 yards?
- Ryton is a rural area can't spoil the area need to reflect that it's a rural school not an iconic school.
- Refurbishments haven't been looked at in final options only new builds. What was the rationale to discount something 89% of people wanted and then go for something not included in the options looked at? Why just greenfield sites looked at for the new site?

Only 400 metres from existing site;
 Major safety hazard – a child was killed;
 Junction has a known accident record. Woodside Lane has major problems with speeding and parking;
 There will be a deterioration in the quality of air and more pollution and noise from the by-pass
 Landfill;
 Will be a split between schools if the infant and juniors aren't going – not progress;
 Cost of infrastructure to put in a greenfield site will be millions;
 Cost less on current site;
 Will be a loss to the area of a large chunk of green belt;
 There will be a major detrimental impact on the quality of life due to litter problems etc which will be created in a nice local area.

- What happens to this site when it is vacated? There are concerns that a supermarket will be built on this site. How long will it be before anything is done on this site?

- It isn't just people in Ryton who object to this proposal but also people from Hookergate.
- Confirmation on land purchase requested. Rumours are circulating that the purchase has gone through.
- Based on the record in Ryton area it is felt that things are a done deal and would be amazed if this process will make any difference.
- The vision is for 20 years time and it is forgotten what we have now which is obviously a prime location, all assets on this location doesn't have to be so much disruption in the community. Which geographic location would be best?
- Are there any plans for the school building drawings etc?
- Will Hookergate close come what may? If Hookergate is closed and all pupils move to Ryton for 12 months will Ryton be developed to accommodate them?
- Would a new build provide the same size accommodation? It would be unlikely to have a hall the size of the current hall in school for instance which is the only hall of its size in the community.
- It is unfortunate there is no money now and there is the possibility that there may not be any money available. If Hookergate pupils come to Ryton can they be accommodated on the current site?
- If Hookergate closes and then come into Ryton Comp for the short term why can't this be possible for the long term? Money could be invested to improve Ryton where everyone is happy. 89% outcome from the consultation no one wants a new build they want Ryton refurbished. There is need for the Council to take on board what people are saying. Cost must be the main priority. Views are not being listened to.
- Has the funding been unsuccessful because no decision has been made on what you want to do? The council needs to decide what they want to go forward.
- People may feel more comfortable if the criteria for the Vision is explained to them.
- Need to be careful not to set up a division. Do support a new school but not a new site. There is emotional feeling in Hookergate and people do feel very sympathetic. If people choose to work together respect is needed from both sides.

- Has PFI been explored at this stage? Is it a possible option?
- What will happen to this site and Hookergate. What is the plan? If there is a vision for the next 20 years there must be a view about what will happen to Hookergate and Ryton sites. What would the Council see the campus being used for other than an educational establishment?
- Can the site be sold as a commercial use site? Site can be sold at the right price unlike a field on the by-pass.
- Would be useful to know the maximum economic value of the site. Different values will depend on use.
- Have all the residents at Grange Estate been sent a copy of the consultation booklet? It is felt that they should be involved. By the time planning stage is reached it will be too late for people to comment. People need to know now. Council have legal obligation to tell them, people don't know about the meetings being held.
- Feeling in the community that people are being kept in the dark.
- Concerned that if funding is tighter there will be constraints and it won't be possible to realise the vision. New state of the art schools which have been built aren't very good.
- Asked to come back with a comparison between existing site and proposed site with timescales. Want to come back to another meeting to consider proper comparisons. Want to be a good school and something to be proud of not part of a site deal.
- Suspect the Council is manipulating the process.
- Lots of community openness and honesty. How open has Council been? Council need to make an effort to distribute leaflets to the wider community.
- Don't do iconic vision do the right thing.

Margaret Whellans thank people for their time and closed the meeting at 8.05 pm.