

Lonsdale School 21-06-07

Speaker key

JW	Jane Wilton
LM	Lindsay Martin
JD	Justin Donovan
PD	Pauline Davis
M?	Unidentified male speaker
F?	Unidentified female speaker

JW Well good evening everyone and welcome to this consultation at Lonsdale School. My name is Jane Wilton and I work with a company called Accent who have been employed by Hertfordshire County Council to help them run these consultation evenings which are going on for around about six weeks throughout all of the schools. And my job is as an independent person to make sure that the meeting is run in a fair and proper manner and to make sure that all the views that you want to express are heard. To that end we have microphones so that we can be heard as well. I'd like you if possible to turn off your mobile phones if you've got them on. If you need to keep them on for a reason do but if they're just on silent they do still cause a little bit of interference with the mikes and recording equipment. So the way the meeting is going to run is that Lindsay be introducing a presentation, which will take about 20 minutes, half an hour, to explain the review. And then after that we'll have an open session where questions from the floor will be taken by the panel and I will be facilitating that session. I think without more ado I'll hand over to the panel to kick off. So, Lindsay Martin.

LM Okay. Thanks Jane. Can you hear me? Yes. Welcome on behalf of the County Council. Nice to see you hear this evening for one of a series of public meetings about the review of mainstream and secondary school provision in Stevenage. This is our agenda, much as Jane has said. Introductions, myself and my colleagues. I'll talk about Building Schools for the Future, which is the context within which the review of provision is being undertaken and my colleague Pauline will talk about why we need a review on what the County Council's proposals are and then as Jane has said, the main part of the evening is to answer your questions, or try to answer your questions, and hear your observations. So I have with me Justin Donovan, Deputy Director, Chief Education Officer, Pauline Davis, Area Planning Manager responsible for the team doing the detailed work on the review in Stevenage because we have other reviews in other places. I'm sandwiched in the middle and I do what it says on the screen. So, Building Schools for the Future. I don't suppose any of us remember education 130, 140 years ago. A nice Victorian picture there. Apologies to those who have heard me give this presentation before in other meetings but it's going to be about the same I'm afraid. This something about where our current education system came from. What I'm seeking to do here is to paint a picture of where it is we come from, not necessarily in this building but from 130, 140 years ago to 40, 50 years ago when I was at school, when many of us were at school, we used slide rules, didn't we? At least I did. I

used Grant Thornton's slide rule, at least I tried to. I wasn't very good at using it actually. I never could quite master it, the slightly more detailed version. When I was at school they were just about introducing these things called calculators. That's a Sinclair, early model Sinclair calculator and I was amazed when somebody told me that one day these would cost less than a pair of shoes. I thought they were having a joke actually and look at how cheap they are now. Four figure tables. It's amazing how the curriculum and technology has changed and we did all that in Hertfordshire in buildings that looked a bit like this like that. This isn't actually Stevenage, this is another part of the county but you can see these flat roved, window walled buildings all over the county in Stevenage built between the early 1950s at Berkeley through the late 1960s in The Valley with various blocks and sections added on afterwards. But in terms of original buildings, the secondary schools at least, were built between the early '50s and the late '60s. Quite a short span and all of a similar type of construction. You'll see this type of construction but I don't think this is that old, '71, towards the end of the period, you will see those beams, those types of beams everywhere. And of course they're all that old, 40 or 50 years old. Some have been well maintained, some have not been quite so well maintained, but they are ageing stock, increasingly unsuitable for what teachers and students want to do in them. They can of course look like this, my colleague yesterday evening when we were doing a similar meeting said that this was the most interesting of the ones that he has seen, but this is a sort of exemplar design for secondary school commissioned by the department of education, who commissioned a number of leading architectural practises to design examples of what secondary schools might or could be like. You won't see any of those in Hertfordshire but they can be inspiring places to be. And should be inspiring places to be because we want students to be inspired don't we? So what is this program all about? Well, it's the government's major investment in secondary and secondary age special schools, designed to transform opportunities and outcomes for young people. And it's about £2.2 billion a year. It sounds an enormously large sum of money and indeed it is, but when you read that terminal five at Heathrow cost £4.3 billion for just one building that puts it into some perspective. It's a lot of money but it's not enormous. And the first wave of the funding to come to Hertfordshire is going to Stevenage. Rounded to the nearest five million, £145 million. Actually £146 point something, million. And that includes this ring fenced, specified, £12 million for information and communications technology. As a token, as it were, of how important that is for the future. So it is a very exciting opportunity for the future for us to work together to create new or major refurbished, major remodelled schools, at Stevenage. A once in several lifetimes opportunity. We haven't built a secondary school in Hertfordshire for 30 years and I doubt, after this program of investment is over, that we will get that chance again for another 30 or more years. So we're building for lots of future students, future generations of students, just as the people who built these buildings in the '50s and '60s built them for the people who are in them now, little foreseeing, I suspect, how much the slide rule would turn into the computer. So we have to get it right for an equivalent amount of time in the future and that's a pretty heavy responsibility I think, on all of us. And you don't get that sort of money from central government without quite a lot of red tape, quite a lot of bureaucracy. Government obviously wants to make sure that its billions of pounds are invested in the best possible way or spent in the best possible way. So there are various hurdles we have to go through, various documents we have to submit for approval. The first one we submitted in April, which has just gone, the next one we have to submit around about October and then the final one in about February to March next year. And it's only after that has been approved that we can

seek a private sector partner to contract with to do the actual building works. So we won't be able to start that process of finding somebody, finding a big organisation to actually do the building until round about spring 2008, so we don't expect actually to start building work, putting a spade in the ground or whatever is the first step on a building site these days, until probably late 2009, maybe even early 2010. Now I've said a lot about buildings really but it isn't actually the starting point of all of this because buildings are only a means to an end really, they're only a mean of providing somewhere appropriate for children to learn in. It's the learning that's important. The buildings are merely a vehicle to enable that to happen in the best possible way, so we wanted to start with, and government expects us to start with, a vision for education. And so we've worked with the heads of schools in Stevenage, governors, parent governors, and other stake holders to develop a vision of what sort of education, type of education, we would want to provide. And we want that to focus on excellent teaching and effective learning. We want to focus on raising attainment, aspirations, participation. We want schools which lead and serve the community with a range of public services. We want a commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles and participation in sport on behalf of young people. We want to offer a diverse range of specialisms, more diverse than the schools are able to offer now, including vocational ones. ICT, I have already mentioned the centrality of that, the importance of that to the future. And of course we do need light, attractive, and flexible spaces in the buildings that are going to last, that are going to be useable for generations to come. That's the vision that we want to achieve through spending the £145 million of the government's money. So what do we need to deliver this vision? Again, we consulted that range of stakeholders that I mentioned earlier and most stakeholders agreed on these four things, that we needed a smaller number of mainstream schools with larger sixth forms, able to offer more specialisms, a wider range of courses, big enough to be efficient and flexible and yet small enough to support relationships between students and staff. Stakeholders also agreed that we need closer links between mainstream and special schools, an important point given where we are this evening. And we can say more about that as we go through the options. Stakeholders agreed that we could develop even closer links with North Hert's College. And we say even closer because they are close now. There is a good working relationship between the schools and the college at the moment but it can be further developed. We also need to improve the facilities for the education support centre. That is children who are educated outside the mainstream, in special schools. It's at the moment in a double mobile classroom on the edge of a primary school. Entirely inappropriate. So we need to do something about that. So that broadly is what stakeholders agreed we needed. So why do we need an area review to realise that? This is where I hand over to my colleague.

PD Hello everybody. As Lindsay said, why do we need an area review? Well, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for Stevenage secondary age children. The investment is there as a means to realise the vision that Lindsay has been talking about. It's not there just for its own sake; we could just rebuild the buildings. But what we want to do is make sure that we spend that money wisely to meet the needs of young people in this town in the future. We need to make sure therefore that we're building for the right number of children that need the places and that we've got that provision in the right place. So what have we done so far? Well we started this review back in January and as Lindsay mentioned, we talked with some of the key stakeholders in the education service in the town. They had teachers, governor representatives, borough councillors, County Councillors, college people, primary head teachers, a whole range of people,

and we discussed what young people would need in the future, we discussed what that vision might be like and we also came together and worked through what options might there be for changing the organisation of schools in the town. We produced a long list together, of different ways of doing it. And we evaluated those options against four criteria which our director devised to make sure we took a fairly holistic approach to things in the future. And I'll go through those with you in a moment. The director then looked at that evaluation and decided which of the options the stakeholders put forward, and we joined with them that he thought we would want to come out and talk to you about and get your views about. That's why we're here tonight, this is one of a series of meetings across the town in schools, about the proposals that are in the consultation document that I'm sure you've all had. I won't read those full texts to you, I'm sure you can read them for yourselves. But you will see that they are fairly holistic. It's not just about numbers of children it's about achievement, it's about buildings and cost and transitional arrangements. So whenever we're looking at a proposal they are the things that we would need to bear in mind. Now we're here in a special school tonight and I realise that some of the things I'm about to say are more geared towards mainstream schools. So I'll briefly go over those and then we can concentrate on the issues that are probably more important to you tonight. First of all, there's a changing demand for mainstream school places in the town. We need about 48 forms of entry, that's 30 pupils in each year group, is a form of entry, across the town in 2017 because the government say we ought to be planning for ten years ahead. That includes the 10% surplus for any unforeseen changes and to allow parents to be able to express a preference for alternative schools than their local ones and have a reasonable chance of getting them. We know that the mainstream places in the town at this point in time are unevenly distributed, different size schools, some areas which don't even have mainstream schools within them at the moment. And that's because the town has been changing shape. There has been new housing mostly in the north east, and the whole town is changing shape. If we look at the map of the town this whole area up here, with the new Great Ashby areas, the [unclear] areas around here, there isn't at the moment a school serving that area and you'll see in the plan in the document you've had that we've identified a new site for a school, one of the existing schools to move to. New housing is projected here and here along the west of Stevenage and eventually, if and when that happens, there will be another secondary school to serve that particular community. So they're the reasons why we're looking at mainstream schools in this town. So what are those proposals? Very briefly we're looking for a pattern of eight forms of entry mainstream schools across the town. We propose those schools to be the schools and as I've mentioned, this new site on Great Ashby, is to move Thomas Alleyne School onto that new site. It does mean that one of the schools would need to close and we are proposing that Heathcote School closes. And this pattern of eight FE schools is the County Council's preferred option. We do have a second option. A second proposal of larger schools. That's because for the new school in the north at Great Ashby and for the piece of land that we would need to expand Marriotts School, at this point in time we can't say to you in all honesty that we own those sites outright at the moment. We're in the process of working through that but we are confident that we can bring those proposals about. But we wouldn't be fair to you if we didn't say that there was a small element of risk, we're not expecting any problems, but at this point in time we have to put a what if scenario before you just in case one or the other of those sites doesn't come through. So as I say that would be a pattern of larger schools, fewer of them, and depending on whether we hit a problem with the land we need for Marriotts or the land at the north, either of those schools would also need to

close. But I suppose what you're here for and what you're more interested in is what are the proposals for special schools and in particular for this one? For this school there are two proposals, two options there... You can either stay here on this site and we'll invest money in your buildings and facilities to improve them, as Lindsay has talked about, or there is a possibility of your relocating to one of two mainstream school sites. And I'm sure that when we get to the next part of this session it will be very interesting to hear what your views are about that. Briefly for Greenside School for children with severe learning difficulties what we are proposing is that we build buildings and co-locate that secondary part of Greenside School in conjunction alongside the school buildings for the Barnwell School. And that will leave the existing Greenside buildings available for the primary children to have the full run of those existing buildings, which should be a vast improvement for them. For the valley school, which is the school for secondary aged pupils with moderate learning difficulties - and we're conscious that some of those have more complex needs - we have a whole spectrum of keeping the school on its current site and improving the buildings there through to the potential for closure of the school and having special needs units within each mainstream school. The school could, just in the same way as we're talking about Lonsdale's possibilities, re-locate to a mainstream school site and have the two schools running side by side or the school could continue to exist with the children on their role but the young people will be operating out of the mainstream school sites with The Valley School taking full responsibility and maintenance of their professional wellbeing and delivery of their education. So a whole range of options there that we generally want people's views about. For parents, for staff, for you as governors, and interested people, the important thing about transitional arrangements is to make sure that any building works we plan are planned with you rather than for you, and without any reference to you. So students, staff, and parents, and governors, will be involved in developing those school projects, building works. And obviously we can't say the building work won't have any disruptive element to it because building work can be disruptive. But we need to plan them to minimise that disruption. But where we plan to build new buildings completely we wouldn't be proposing to move any young people into them until such time as they're completed. For the closing schools, the mainstream schools we've been talking about, what we would do is to have real sensitivity and care in how we handle that situation. One of the important things is in a closing school situation that parents can have confidence that during the period up until closure that the quality of education for the children that are left within it is of good quality and that as much care as possible is taken to make sure of maintaining it. For staff, we want them to be involved with governors and other organisation in developing those transition plans. It's important that we understand the needs and that we get it right. But other schools that are involved in those transition plans, certainly for mainstream schools, it isn't just about one school that will be involved; all schools will work with us to make the best transition plans for staff. And also if it comes to it the County Council does have a good redeployment scheme, it has an excellent track record in making sure that staff who want to remain can continue to work within the authority. What we want to do is to allow them to continue to work and contribute to the exciting future for Stevenage. For students we want them to work with us about those transition plans. And for parents of those young people, if your child has to move school the County Council will make a contribution to a new uniform and the schools will coordinate that to get best value for money out of those arrangements. Just before we get to the really important part, which is hearing what you have to say about this, let's just have a look at how the decisions will be taken. The most important thing is that you make

sure that we hear your views. We're tape recording this tonight so that other people can hear what you've had to say but we also need you to fill out the forms, write to us, e-mail us. I don't mind how you communicate to us but make sure you do because what we will make sure is that not only will we represent your views back to County Councillors when they're making decisions but we will make every single individual response available for all of the County Councillors to see first hand. So it's not just my interpretation or my staff's interpretation of what you've been saying, they will be able to read that first hand, which is important and the reason why you should send them in. This consultation finishes on the 7 August; please make sure you get the forms and letters in by then. The education panel of the County Council will then consider those responses and the issues raised in them, on the 3 October and then their views will go to the cabinet of the County Council which is the part of the County Council that makes the decisions. And that cabinet on the 15 October will decide on whether or not to proceed to the next stage with any of the proposals. For some proposals which are fairly substantial changes like opening of the schools, closing of schools, opening or changing special needs provision, they are what the government call prescribed alterations and that means we have to publish legal notices in the newspapers. Those legal notices are called statutory notices and if we need to publish them we will do so after the cabinet in October, they will run for six weeks and any of you can object to those proposals. If you do object we have to refer them back to the County Council. We said here when we did this at the end of 2007, the government have changed the arrangements for the final decision making process. It will now go back to the cabinet of the County Council and that's going to be in January now. Both the education panel and the cabinet, as you will see there, are meetings that are open to the public so that does mean you can come along and listen to what goes along and see the decision making in action. The cabinet will allow a representative of a school involved in a proposal to say something, but it's not the sort of meeting that everybody can put their hand up, like this is, and say what they want to say, and expect to get a response. So at this stage I think I'm going to stop talking at you and hopefully we can hear what you have to say. Thank you.

JW Thank you, Pauline. As Pauline mentioned we are recording this and so because of that I would like you when you want to make a point to put your hands up so that we can pass a microphone around so that that gets onto the tape, so that the councillors can hear it. It will be possibly streamed on the web, I don't know whether that's actually going to happen – no, it's not going to happen – but there will be a transcript of this meeting for you to have a look at in two or three weeks time, when they've had a chance to transcribe it. We will finish the open part of the meeting by 8.45 and then that gives you time to talk to the panel about individual issues if any of you have individual issues about your particular children, which are not things that we need to discuss in an open meeting but you might want to talk to one of the panel individually about. So without further ado let's go to the first question. So can I see who has a question to ask? Anybody have a question? Thank you.

F? I wanted to ask you, you said under the heading of transitional arrangements there will be maintenance of [unclear]. Having seen schools close over the past number of years, how can you promise that that will happen? It hasn't happened before, how can you be sure it will happen this time?

JD I think it's worth bearing in mind we're not proposing closing Lonsdale. Okay, a general point. Well it depends on the context of the school. Are you referring to Heathcote here?

F? I'm referring to whichever school you close.

JD Right. What we do is put in place a whole series of measures. So for example the first thing to do is to make sure we don't disrupt the children during their key stages. So that what we'd have to do is organise arrangements so that if the children have to transfer they do so at the end of key stage three or at the end of key stage four, not part way through. The other thing we would do is work across the town as a whole to hang onto as many teachers as we possibly can. Because if you think back to one of the slides that Pauline was talking about there is actually a very slight increase in the number of children in Stevenage coming this way. And therefore unlike other reviews where we're having to strip out surplus places here we're not doing that, we're distributing the same number, in fact we've increased the number of places across the town. So we're very keen to negotiate with schools and governing bodies to hang onto the teachers of closing schools. Partly because we think they deserve that kind of professional courtesy and support because they've done a great job, and more selfishly because we want to increase the staff in the other schools and recruiting good teachers is not easy. It's not the cheapest place to live, in Hertfordshire. So we will have a whole range of procedures in place. Having said that, there is a natural turnover of staff anyway and so we'd have two strategies, one to retain as many staff as we can but also to recruit as many new staff as well. What we want to do is once we've got through the process that Pauline was talking about is to make sure the country knows what we're doing in Stevenage because it's quite an exciting project. Brand new schools or very well refurbished schools, they'll be some of the best schools in the country, so we want to make sure that that attracts staff. So we have a whole range of strategies in place, depending on which school.

JW Thank you. Another question. This gentleman down here.

M? Could you expand a little bit on what is meant by relocation on sites that we've got [unclear]?

JD Sure. What we have in mind is that we would have two separate schools. So that Lonsdale would remain as a school with its own governing body, own head teacher, uniform, and building. But they would be side by side, either one building with a kind of divider between them or two separate buildings connected. What we're trying to do is in a sense is have our cake and eat it because we want to have some flexibility built in so that if, for example, you have a young person at Lonsdale that actually requires the kind of environment that you already have here, secure, small space, those kind of support arrangements, then that child might stay on the Lonsdale site for most if not all of the week. But there will be other children who might use Lonsdale for part of the week but would be able to flourish in, for example, going into the science lessons and into the mainstream school. So what we want to do is get some really clever architecture so that we have two separate schools working together side by side collaboratively so that each child, each young person, can have a tailor made program and get the best of both worlds. What I suspect would happen is as the children grow older and work through the school,

they would be spending more and more time on the mainstream site. But that would be monitored. So I suppose the key word is flexibility really. And it's going to require some quite clever architectural design to make that work. But as I say, there would be two separate schools. They would share for example a whole range of things like the car park, they might share the same caretaker, they could share some costs both capital and revenue but they would remain separate schools. Lindsay looks poised to add something.

LS What I was going to do is I wonder if Maria, who has given some thought to this along with mainstream head colleagues, might like to add something. I don't want to put you on the spot Maria, but if you would like to add...

MA I would like to add, as head of Lonsdale, what my thoughts and feelings and those of my colleagues in mainstream schools are, especially [unclear] who is head of Marriotts [unclear]. We have had very long conversations about what co-location might look like for the benefit of both sets of students and I'm very clear here at Lonsdale School that once we provide a very unique and comfortable environment for our young people - and we need to maintain that and consistently maintain what the vulnerable young people need, that we work with - there is also great difficulty for Lonsdale at the moment to provide the quality and equal opportunity of curriculum access, and co-location would give us opportunities for developing curriculum access for young people who are academically very able but also need a lot of specialist support and help. So you could maintain Lonsdale's unique identity and culture but also look at [unclear] our curriculum. In terms of supporting our mainstream colleagues as well, which is something that we talked about with Marriotts; we already have very very strong links with Marriotts which work very well, and we've seen Marriotts students respond exceptionally well in well controlled projects and within well controlled environments so that the Lonsdale pupils and Marriotts pupils both develop self esteem, self confidence and there is a raising of awareness about equal opportunities, about disability rights and disability access, and all those sorts of issues. I think if we are responding as educators to our community that there is an expectation on us to actually educate Stevenage and young people who are being educated at the moment, about their rights as citizens and also to ensure that the vulnerable young people in the community have an equal opportunity as well.

JW Thank you very much.

JD I would just like to add to that, because it is a key point. I hope Patrick can make it but talking as somebody who has worked in both in special and mainstream sectors, who had a proper job as a teacher, there are three things that a mainstream school would benefit by in this. One Maria has set out, the personal development of the children in the mainstream school, the second though, and I'll say this because Maria won't because she's too polite, actually what mainstream school teachers learn from special teachers is how to teach. If you work with children with special needs you have to break down learning into objectives and you have to really understand the process of teaching and learning in real detail. And that stands you in very good stead as a maths teacher with a [unclear] maths or 16 year olds or whatever, because it's the same skills and principles. I know Patrick is very keen indeed to develop some of the pedagogical skills that special school teachers have developed over time. And the third thing, and

I hate to raise the issue of money, but it's a very efficient way of spending the budgets. Lonsdale will have the same revenue and will hopefully have some reduced costs. Not just because it was in a more efficient building but that it could share some of the maintenance costs between the two schools giving it more money to spend on the children. So those are the three things at both schools, Marriotts and Lonsdale would benefit from. So it's quite a long, multi-faceted response but I think it's a key issue.

JW Right. Other questions. Thank you.

F? If Lonsdale were to co-locate with Marriotts how would you go about the protection of vulnerable children on a co-located site? This is something I would be quite concerned about.

JD The first thing is the physical protection in the sense that Lonsdale will have its own school, have its own entrance. So there's that safe and secure environment for the children and young people that you have now. I think that we would have to use, to be frank with you, the next two, three, four, possibly five years, to make sure that the children coming in to Marriotts or Thomas Alleyne, whichever school is going to co-locate, to actually work with those children over a period of time, because this is not unique, in fact my first teaching job was working with children with physical disabilities in a mainstream school, co-located, down in West Sussex. That was a long time ago. And it worked really well, not because of the money spent on the facilities, which were okay actually. They weren't as great as I thought they would be. But because before I got there the staff had spent a lot of time working with the children so it felt like a single community. And actually if you get that right the children on the mainstream site will be very protective of the children from the special school but it does take time so to use that three, four, five year period to get that in place.

JW Yes, do please go ahead.

F? Part of the [unclear] includes residential care for our children, a new build on the Marriotts site I presume would include a residential provision for the children as it is now. It's such an important part of their independence.

JD Yes. One of the key areas which I think need to be improved at Lonsdale is the residential accommodation actually. I'm not an expert in that area but everybody whose views I trust say that we need to do some significant work. So the answer to that is yes. We need to have a conversation with the governing body and the head about how much accommodation – do we need the same amount, less, more, or what that accommodation might look like and whether the accommodation would be, certainly on the same campus, but we were having a conversation earlier actually about whether it might be a separate building with a different feel to it so that the children feel as if they're not in school for 24 hours a day. So we'd have those kinds of conversations. But bearing in mind we're talking here about principles, the short answer which I said a few minutes ago was yes.

JW Yes.

F? Can you guarantee that a service level agreement for therapy, which is another very very important part of the school life of Lonsdale, for the children that attend the school, would be written in as part of the new build? And especially in light of the fact that it's so vital that you get this right, for the future generations of children that will be coming in to Lonsdale, and into other schools, and for their healthy lifestyles. Because the therapy is such an integral part of the day at Lonsdale and that it has a service level agreement I think is a very very necessary thing that should happen.

JD I agree. And I actually have been talking to our colleagues in health; we're having discussions with health to sort that out. My view is that's nothing to do with the review, we have to do that anyway. Whether there was BSF and the review or not, getting some sort of formal agreement so that heads like Maria, not just Maria but particularly schools like this, can plan ahead and know what level of support they're going to get for a three year period, so they can timetable it, plan it, resource for it, and work it into the system. At the moment it's a little unpredictable. We're never going to get the level of resource we want because we could always use more, but we ought to know what level it is and how secure that is so I actually agree with the point you're making but I think we would do that anyway, whether or not we had a review. And we certainly wouldn't wait for the review to do that.

JW Yes. Has anybody got any more issues? Maria.

MA If the proposal is that Lonsdale maintains its current site, which I hope it's not going to be, my preference is for co-location, if you were to maintain this current site which is no longer fit for purpose and we're looking at updating this current building, I would have great concerns – I'm not sure if this is a question or a comment really, about how that would be managed given the nature of the pupils. Because decanting us somewhere else, possibly it's not an option, certainly when you look at health provision and the vulnerable nature of some of the pupils.

LS I'll take it as a question. You're absolutely right, it is a major issue with any remodelling or refurbishment project, how to do that without de-canting the pupils and we do have quite a bit of experience in doing that but not in special schools. We do it in primary, we've done it in secondary but I don't think we've done it in special, at least not recently. And as you say, decant brings its own problems and its own issues. I think the only answer I can give this evening is that as you know, there will be a design team visiting you before the end of term, that is our firm of architects and a client design advisor and a project manager for MACE and one of our educationalists from Standards and School Effectiveness. And that team will want to listen to and look at the vision for your school, your strategy for change that I know you've been working on since the half day that we had in the hotel. And the importance of that is that they will want to translate your strategy and to turn your vision into buildings terms. Now I think until they have been able to work on that and have looked at the extent to which, were it to remain here, these buildings would need to be remodelled and refurbished. It's difficult indeed to answer your question because it depends how extensive that is and what it entails. How intrusive it is, how noisy it is, etc etc. A whole range of factors. So I think we have two possibilities. One as you say is de-cant which has its own issues; the other is working in situ which also has its own issues.

And we would have to work on those. Clearly new build where it's all completed and you just move into it is by far the better option from that point of view. Yes, I agree with that entirely.

JD Just for the record. In terms of the options we're talking about here, as officers, you'll see that we haven't put up a third option when it comes to special schools. We're putting options out and we'll hear what people say, but certainly our feeling is that co-location is something that we'd like to pursue. Now there are two reasons why that might not happen. The first is if during the consultation there's a ground swell against the idea which would lead us again to talk that through. We haven't picked that up yet but that would be one thing. And the second one, to be blunt, is if 345 million won't go far enough. And we know that there's going to be some difficult decisions to be taken because there's never enough money. 145 million is a lot of money. The cheaper option is to say here and the more expensive option is to co-locate and we just need to look at the funding. We're confident that we can make the money stretch but those are the two main reasons. So when, Maria, you say you prefer the one option, just on the record so you know those are the two reasons why it might not happen. But as things stand, as officers, we support the idea in principle.

JW More questions. Any more questions. Oh, sorry, I didn't see your hand up.

F? Well, I'm not sure. Is it the senior school, because I'm wondering what's going to happen to the primary? As far as I can see the primary will stay here and the next step is to [unclear]

LM No, it will be a complete move; it will be the whole thing. Yes, we wouldn't separate. Okay. That's right, that's a fair point. And I think we've probably compounded it in the supposed split of Greenside. I say supposed split, it would remain one school but it would be on a split site. The senior pupils, the secondary pupils, co-located with Barnwell and the primary pupils remaining in their current accommodation. We've probably confused it with that model. That isn't the intention here. If there was to be a move and go location it would be the entire school.

F? In that case, the only thing that I've ever had a problem with Lonsdale is the actual structure of the buildings. Everything else has been absolutely perfect. The educational side, the therapy side. [unclear]. If there's all the facilities that go with it that would be fine but it's the safety of our children. One of the things that I find very useful here is that my son can go out in his wheelchair, out in the car park and he is totally safe. Would that happen in a main school situation? It has to be a school separate.

LM Yes, the design would have to ensure that degree of accessibility and safety.

F? [unclear] he had to go with a carer from his classroom to the taxi and that was a huge step.

JD Point well made. The two reassurances that I can give you are that we are talking here about Lonsdale remaining a school and so the children would go to the school on one campus. And the second it when we start to look at the design, if this goes through and the funding's

there, the cabinet agree, when we actually start designing the buildings we will be talking to the parents and the children about what that might look like. Because little things like that have a major impact on the experience of the children on a daily basis, so we have to get it right first time. So we will be talking to parents like yourself and saying, look, let's talk about the detail and try and work that in.

JW Any more questions? Yes, the gentleman at the back there.

M? Sorry. The accessibility you're talking about, it's not about Lonsdale it's about the secondary school. What factors or what strategies are in place, because if I'm right and my maths is right, you going to have 300 to 400 pupils per school go into the secondary school, what about the infrastructure that's going to be able to cater for that? Because if you take – my kids go to Nobel – you've got lots of pupils that can't cope with that amount of traffic. You want to encourage more pupils to go on their bikes and walk to school, that [unclear] problem. But looking at the map, I thoroughly understand that we don't seem to have anything [unclear] but if the infrastructure can't cope with what design factor that is going to go into these schools that's going to encourage our kids to get themselves to and from [unclear].

PD It's the same principle that obtains for both the special schools and the mainstream schools because what we will be doing, the design teams will be working with each of the secondary schools and we also have teams that liaise with the highways agencies, the town planning system. And so we're confident about each of the sites that we're proposing, that that expansion can be dealt with quite adequately. So when we do the design for a set of buildings on a mainstream school site. Let's take your situation. What we'll be doing is looking with the highways people, with the town planning people. We've already done that to a certain extent. Just where the children will come from in general, what the road systems can and can't cope with, what the changing pattern of travel to different schools will be and making sure that the works that are undertaken on each site allow for better access where it's needed so that existing schools that may have, for example, constricted entrances and no easy way for people to come out, except for the way they go in, those sorts of strategies will be adopted. But we all know that it's not just about the build environment, it's about the strategies that each and every school are encouraged to adopt in terms of their travel plan for their school. Encouraging walking to school, cycling to school, making sure the right facilities are available. All of those things will be looked at under the town planning system. Because when we expand schools we'll have to get town planning for that and the town planners will want to know what the highway strategy is, what the schools travel plan is saying about those things, before they'll give us town planning permission for the extensions.

JW Any other questions.

F? I've got a couple of questions. One was [unclear] 45 or 46 million. Will we be holding some of that back towards the cost of a new school for [unclear] should that go ahead?

LM No. That's a separate – that's completely outside the Building Schools for the Future funding because that school will be funded by the developer building the houses. It's part of the master plan.

F? My other question was we're talking about having much larger entry, nine or ten form entry. 300 children. And at the same time you've talked about there being [unclear]. How do you propose that to happen with 300 new children coming in?

JD I think it's worth bearing in mind that eight forms of entry, which is what we're looking to do, feels large in Hertfordshire because we don't have many of them. We have lots of four or five form entry. Actually, nationally, eight forms of entry is not a big school. It really isn't. And the great majority of schools up and down the country are eight forms of entry or more. The reason we're going for it, what it does mean though, is that you have to manage them and organise them differently. If you try and run an eight form entry school as if it's a four form entry school you have difficulty. So the role of the form tutor becomes much more important, so the children feel part of that group. Assemblies are very important so at each school we need an assembly hall big enough for the whole school to come together to feel part of a single community, which needs bigger halls. The way in which you timetable will vary slightly so the way in which you run the school would be different but eight forms of entry isn't big. The reason we want the eight forms of entry are firstly because we want the numbers to be big enough so that when we get to key stage four the schools are big enough and have enough children to be able to afford to run a wider range of vocational courses. They tend to be at least twice as expensive as running, if you like academic courses. Instead of about three thousand a head they cost five or six, sometimes seven thousand. And if you've got relatively small numbers of young people it becomes difficult to fund it and so their choice is restricted. Also we want the schools big enough to generate a big enough sixth form so that the six form numbers are big enough to, if you like, eat their own costs. If you've got over 200 young people in the sixth form it becomes financially self sustaining, rather than drawing funding from the younger children which can happen with smaller sixth forms. So size is important but I take the point. You cannot run an eight form entry school unless it's a little school. But I wouldn't want you to go away thinking that eight forms of entry schools are huge. It's a standard kind of size.

F? What you're talking about is then proposal one. Proposal two is [unclear]

JD It's unlikely. The reason there is because there are two bits of land we don't own, going back to the gentleman's point. At Marriotts, if that goes to eight forms of entry, we need different access points otherwise it's going to be really difficult and we don't own that land and we're not the planning authority. So that's our back-up plan. One of the reasons that we are less comfortable, two reasons we are less comfortable, not because ten forms of entry are too big, they're not. That's not a problem. There are two major problems. The first is you are then reducing parental choice by another school because by taking Heathcote out of the system the bottom line is parents in Stevenage have one less school to express a preference. If we take two schools out then that's reducing parental choice again. The main reason is a bit more pragmatic than that. If they go to ten forms of entry, most of the sites will be really quite full and if in some years in the future the town expands slightly then there's going to be difficulty. Say in ten or

twenty years time. If there are eight forms of entry and in ten or twenty years time we need to expand them by one or two forms of entry we can do that. Most of the sites are big enough. So we're keen if we can to have eight forms of entry but we could manage with ten. Okay.

JW Do you have any more questions? Okay. You've got lots more time if you want to use it but if you've had enough that's fine. One more question here.

M? Will [unclear] in some existing sites put more money into the pot, as it were, from the sale of that land, to increase the 145 million?

LM Yes. Yes it would.

JW Well, there's not need for you all to stay if your questions have been answered satisfactorily. I'm very pleased that the panel have met the brief and explained everything clearly enough for you to be able to go away and consider. Do please remember what Pauline was saying earlier that anything that you think about later you can add by actually sending in forms or e-mailing or I think you can post things on the website. So if things occur to you after this presentation then do please make your feelings known. The panel will be here if anybody wants to talk to them individually but I'd like to thank you very much and I hope it's been useful for you. Thank you.