

Radburn public meeting 04/07/07

Speaker key

JR Janet Robinson
PD Pauline Davis
WD Wendy Dellar
AS Audience Speaker
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JR Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Can you hear me at the back? I've got a microphone on. It's lovely to see so many of you here. I was going to sit down and just talk informally, but I think I had better stand up, otherwise, people at the back won't see. My name's Janet Robinson. I'm expecting my colleague, Pauline Davis, to be joining us. She's the planning manager covering Letchworth; I'm a planning officer; and with me is a planning assistant, Karen Mumbray over there. Thank you all for coming this afternoon. This is one of a series of meetings we're holding about the public consultation in Letchworth. I'm glad that so many parents have been able to come to this meeting today. The copies of the slides that you have are ones that we used for the evening meetings, which were facilitated by an outside company called Accent, which we haven't got today, because we viewed this as a less formal occasion for parents to come and hear part of presentation, and to ask questions. I'm using a microphone, here. We have microphones ready for your own use, at the end of the presentation, for the questions - if you wouldn't mind using those. Because, what's happening is, we are recording the meeting, so that all your comments can then be put on to a transcript, and made available to the decision makers, once this process ends. So, if you wouldn't mind, once we get to that stage, if you let Karen come round to you with the microphone.

Okay, so turning now to the slides: straight on to page two. Does everybody have sight of a copy? I'm not sure we've got enough really, there are so many of you. Do you not have a copy of that? Do you have sight of a copy you can look over? So, why have a review, and what is our role here? Our role is to make sure that that there are enough school places for the children, in each area, but there aren't too

many. We have to manage the supply and demand of school places. That's because - if you get schools with too few pupils, then they can become vulnerable, for a number of reasons. One of which is connected with the funding, because, for each child in the school, the school gets a certain amount of funding. So it follows that the lower the numbers go, the lower the funding is. That's just one aspect of it. We need to manage the supply of places, to make sure that we're using our resources efficiently, by both school, and countywide. With that in mind, we've looked at the numbers in Letchworth, where numbers have been falling. According to our calculations, we need to reduce between two and three forms of entry across the town. We've related it to FE – a form of entry being 30 children per year group, so a school which admits 30 children in the reception class, would be one form of entry. If a school admitted 60 children a year, making two classes in reception, that would be two forms of entry, which we'd call two FE. So, looking at the actual forecast, and the [unclear] places in Letchworth, at the moment we have enough room for 14.8 forms of entry – across the town, this is. And our reception numbers: when we started this whole process that we're in the middle of now, we had 12.4 forms of entry, so that was already a lot more places than there were children. However, our forecasts are showing that the numbers of children will reduce even further, so that by 2012-2013, we'll have only 10.9 forms of entry worth of children, against the capacity of 14.8. Because of that, our members decided that they wanted to review the provision of school places in this area. And that review started in [unclear] 2007. First of all the discussion tried [unclear] what we call stakeholders, and they are [unclear].

AS Excuse me, the speaker has gone off.

JR So we're just going through the process of the review, talking about the stakeholders and the discussions we've had with them early in 2007. A long list of possible options, put forward by stakeholders and officers, emerged from discussion with the stakeholders. These options were evaluated against four tests, which you can see on your papers there. The tests that we use - when we're looking at these options for what we might do to reduce surplus places - are to reduce the surplus places, but to provide places where they're needed, to meet demand from parents. Also to enhance the capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness, and to offer extended schools. Further, they should have acceptable implications for the building and design, environmental impact, and cost, and they should have acceptable transitional arrangements for any pupils who are affected by the changes. They're the tests that any options that were put forward were evaluated against. Anybody who's interested in looking at what those options were can go to our website, and see any options that were put forward, that were evaluated, and that were discarded as a result of those evaluations. Once the options had been evaluated, a decision was then made by the director of CSF but in conjunction with the elected members, as to which proposals should be consulted on. As a result of that, we started this public consultation. Hopefully, you all received a consultation document - and I'm pretty sure you did, because we've had a large number of responses from you, from the last page of that document. So, what are those proposals for consultation? In this part of the town, on the Jackmans Estate - because there are two parts to the

consultation going on in this town, and I know you're here primarily for the consultation affecting particularly the Jackmans Estate, which we'll talk about most - but I will touch on the other part later on, as well. So, proposal one is to either close Lannock Primary School - that's the County Council's preferred option - or to close this school, Radburn Primary School; and the second part of the proposal is to close Westbury Primary School, which I'll come to later on.

On the Jackmans Estate, the option is either close Lannock or close Radburn, why do we want to have one school on the Jackmans Estate? Do we want to have a school on the Jackmans Estate? Our discussion with stakeholders, and our looking at the numbers of children we have, tells us that we do want to have a school on the Jackmans Estate. We do need a school; there are enough children to support one school on the Jackmans Estate. We want to provide sufficient places on the estate to meet demand, and we feel we can do that in one school. And we want to create a one form entry school, which allows, also, for the provision of a Children's Centre on the Jackmans Estate. That there should be a Children's Centre, as part of that provision, came out as a very important part of the stakeholder discussion. As you know, from what you've read and what you've heard so far, and from what you know of your own school and Lannock School - this is not a review that's anything to do with what schools are achieving, both schools are doing very well. It's not anything to do with standards; it is to do with numbers. We feel that, by having one full and vibrant school, we'll be able to build on that achievement that both schools have been working so hard for: to provide the best for the children coming up in the future.

If we accept that we need one school on the estate, the question is, which one? And why have we preferred the option to retain Radburn and to close Lannock? We had a team of experts, in building and land matters, who went round all the schools in the town, and advised us on the accommodation, and the sites. From their advice, and from what we've also seen for ourselves, we feel that the Radburn building is a better place for providing education. It's got discrete classrooms; it's got airy classrooms; the ventilation's better; it's felt to be a better place for delivering education in the 21st century. There are more other users in Radburn than there are in Lannock. A number of other groups use Radburn School, for instance: Primary Support Base, pre-schools, Vision for Hearing Impaired, Opportunity Class - all sorts going on here. We feel that by keeping this set of buildings, we disrupt fewer pupils and people in general, partly for those other users, and partly because the numbers of pupils in this school is greater than the number of pupils in Lannock. Here it's about 180, in Lannock it's about 116, so you're disrupting fewer children and fewer other users. We've also looked at the geography - if I can refer you to the maps that you've got there. The first map shows you Lannock School, and all those little numbers tell you how many pupils live in that little postcode. If you counted up all those numbers, adding the threes and the twos or whatever, you would see that those pupils attending Lannock School live where those little numbers are. And likewise, if you look at the Radburn map, that's the pupils attending Radburn, and where they live. What's striking about it is how similar they are, in that the pupils from both schools live all over the estate. It's not that everybody's opting to go to their nearest school, they're opting to go to a school, it seems to me, not really connected with geographical reasons, in many of these cases. Some work we've

done, at looking at where pupils live, and how far it is for them to go to school, and how far it would be for them to go to school if they had to change and go to the other school, tells us that, if we closed Lannock, fewer children would have further to travel. You can understand that Radburn would be a closer school for more pupils. There's not a huge amount in it, because this estate is not that large, and both schools are accessible to many children, but it is slightly nearer for more pupils if we retain Radburn. Also, looking at the finances, which are another aspect that we always have to look at, it would be less expensive to retain Radburn. You might say how can that be? If you look at the Lannock site, there are already two sets of buildings, more or less, but here there's only one. At the moment in Lannock, there's another user, which is the Ethnic Minority Support Service, called MECSS; they will be moving out, and so apart from the nursery children, that building would be empty. One option would be to use that building. But our advice, from our building consultants, is that the cost of adapting that building back into use as a school - even though it was part of a school originally - would be much more than providing temporary classrooms on this site. You might think, well, how does that add up? The reason is, that, at the moment, the MECSS building is designated as office accommodation, with regulations surrounding that; if it was to be taken back for school use, it would have to satisfy the planning and building regulations for a school, and it would have to comply with all the recent legislation to do with that. That's the reason why it brings it up to a large sum of money, which makes it more expensive. The other point about these two schools is that, as some people have said to us, the access to Radburn School is not as well laid out as the access to Lannock School. Lannock has got the road that can be a sort of informal, one-way system and, I understand, is used that way, whereas this school is at the end of a cul-de-sac. We are investigating that; we have traffic consultants working at the moment - you may have seen them around in their bright jackets - looking at the traffic situation, and looking at solutions to improve the in and out at this school, if this is the school that remains open. We have had the suggestion that we should close both schools, and open a new one, which is an interesting one. If you think that through, you think, well, where would that new school be? What sites do we have available to us? And of course, the sites we have available to us are Lannock and Radburn. So, a new school would be either on the Lannock site, or on the Radburn site. If we wanted to go down that road, there would be a number of considerations, which have meant that we have not taken that route. One of those is that it increases uncertainty for more people. We know this whole process leads to uncertainty for all involved. We understand that. If we're proposing to close one school, the staff of that school is at risk; if we propose to close two schools, and open a new one, the staff of both schools are at risk. The children at both schools are all having their school closed, and there's uncertainty for them, the children, the parents, and also, for the staff. So we feel it disrupts fewer people again, gives fewer people uncertainty, if we opt to close one school. Also, since the end of May this year, the law has changed, and the government has brought in something to do with competition for schools. If a local authority decides to open a new school, it can't just do that any more. It has to open it up to competition. So if we decided to close both Lannock and Radburn, and open a new school, we wouldn't be able to do that without opening it up to ask anybody else at all if they would like to run that

school. And that would be open to anybody; it could be open to faith groups, it could be a private school that wanted to open another private school, any group at all could compete to run the school on this estate. We feel that adds to uncertainty, but possibly even more relevant for us, is that it adds to the time scale. The process of going out to ask for those proposals in competition, and to go through the whole process that's necessary, would add about another nine months to a year to the process. That is another nine months to a year of uncertainty for all children, parents and staff involved. We can't just amalgamate schools. In the past, we have been able to close two schools and open a new one, without this extra element; and people often refer to that informally as amalgamation, although in law, it's always been a closure of two schools and an opening of a new one. But because of that new element now, since May 27th I think, we can no longer go down that route without adding to the time scale. Going on now to the practical implications of if one school closes. All the pupils on the roll of either school would be offered a place at the remaining school. If Lannock closed, all the pupils would be offered a place at Radburn. If Radburn closed, all the pupils would be offered a place at Lannock. We've looked at the figures, at the numbers of children who are likely to be at the school, at the time when these proposals will be put into practice, which would be September 2009. Looking at that, we've projected forward, looking at the numbers of children in each year group at the moment. So current Year 4 would then be Year 6; current Year 3 would then be Year 5; etc. And that's what this slide's telling you. Year 6 in September 2009, there would be a total, across the whole estate, of 37 pupils; that's if nobody moves out and nobody moves in – there's always a bit of that – so, 37 across the two schools. In Year 5, there'd be 30; Year 4, 39; Year 3, 34; and in Year 2, where it says, allocs – that's short for allocations – is where children who are due to start in September this year have been allocated a place for September. That's the best information we've got, although there may be other parents, who've not actually registered for a place, who will be coming. We've got 19 at the moment and that could go up. We've worked out that that number is not likely to go up anywhere more than 30. So for the Year 1 - and we don't know who these children are yet in Year 1 - we've said there'd be up to 30 children there. Not there aren't likely to be more, because of our information on numbers of children being born in the area, numbers of children coming through, that'd be up to 30. Then, in September 2009, it could only be up to 30, because at that stage, there would only be one school, and the admission limit would be 30. So we know that would not be more than 30. So, that's looking at all the pupils who would be in the school at that time, September 2009. More work's got to be done on this. But if we've got that number of pupils, we need to look at each school and see, how would we accommodate those pupils? If necessary, we'll provide extra classrooms while that number of children are moving through the system, because eventually, of course, it would just be a one FE school, and there'd be enough accommodation. If either of the schools closes, staff at the closing school would be at risk. We would work closely with the staff at that school to re-deploy them into other schools. We have got meetings set up with staff at the schools affected, with our human resources colleagues, who are experts in that area. We've done a lot of these consultations now, across the County, and I think our track record of redeploying other staff into schools is 99%, or something approaching that. We accept that there

are difficulties around that, and any disruption is something to be worked through; and that teaching staff may find other jobs; support staff may find that they want something more local. But across the whole gamut of staff, I think our track record is 99% in finding jobs for staff who have lost their job as part of the consultation. And we're doing more work on that, meeting with all staff of the schools affected.

There are other practical implications. If one school closes and the children come to the other school, then there'll be a need for a new school uniform. The County Council does make a contribution to that. What normally happens is that the receiving schools takes details of your children's sizes, and then buys the uniform in bulk, so that you get the benefit of bulk purchase, and more for your money, hopefully. The transport policy of the County Council applies. Free transport will be provided if anybody under eight had to travel more than two miles, or over eight, had to travel more than three miles. I think, again, in this case, the majority of the pupils live on the Jackmans Estate, and wouldn't be affected by that. And any costs – I've talked about looking at traffic issues around this school, and looking at provision of necessary classrooms – would be met by County Council funding. So that's not anything that the school would have to pay for, obviously.

That's the Jackmans Estate. I'll just move briefly on to the Westbury situation, although, as I said, I know you're probably more interested in what's happening with the Jackmans Estate. Westbury School: it's a proposal to close the school; it's not an either/or, in that instance. It's a proposal to close Westbury School. And again, it's not because of what the school is doing. Again, they're doing a great job - as indeed are all the schools involved in this consultation. But they are very low on numbers. We need to reduce places, and that is the school with the greatest surplus in that area. As I said, the school's achieving well. We've had lots of issues raised about the SEN needs of the children, the travel distances, pre-school, etc. And we're looking at those issues. A Children's Centre is planned for that area. And again, if that school closes, then that Children's Centre will be provided in some format. So they are issues that are all being considered, and will be addressed. With the Westbury children, if that school closes, all those children will be accommodated at Icknield or Willbury School, whether they're infant or junior. I won't go through the numbers there, it's a similar situation to here. And, again, they'll get uniforms etc. in the same way as Jackmans Estate, if that happens.

On to the last page now. We're in the public consultation period now, and this meeting is part of that, as I've said earlier; it's one of a series of meetings taking place to get your views, and to be able both summarise and relay your views to the County Councillors, but also to enable them to hear your views first hand, by means of the recording, and the transcript that will be made of the recording. We'll also have your response forms, which I know a large number of you have sent in. I think it's about 150 – we've just had another batch handed to us today - it's great that you're all letting us have your views on that. The public consultation is running now, and will finish on August 6th; so all those forms need to be in by then, if you haven't done it. After that, as I said, we'll be reflecting your views back to the Education Panel on October 3rd, and then that feeds into the Cabinet, which is where the decision is taken. Both these meetings are public meetings. That means that

they're open to the public, but you can't actually go and speak there; they're not public meetings in that way. They're open to the public, but they're not public meetings. You can go and listen, but you can't go and stand up and say, you don't agree, or whatever; although I think you can elect somebody to go and stand up and talk for about three minutes, with prior notification, if you wanted to do that. So basically, that's the County Council's decision-making process; it is an open meeting. If the Cabinet decides to go ahead with these proposals – the proposal to close Lannock or Radburn or the proposal to close Westbury – then statutory notices would have to be published. And they go in the paper, where you see all the statutory notices to do with road closures and what have you. That gives another six weeks where people can object. What we're in at the moment is the informal consultation; when we get to the statutory notice, that's the formal consultation. That's the legal part of the process where, for six weeks, you have the chance again, to say you disagree with what's been proposed. Then, if there are no objections to the statutory notices, the decision is likely to be in January, since, again, we've had another change from the government recently. Where we used to have the School Organisation Committee, which decided these proposals in the final event, now, any objections go back to the County Council, so the procedure is slightly different. The final decision would be available at the beginning of the New Year. As I've said a number of times, this is all part of the consultation; and I do want to stress that this is a public consultation, that no decisions have been taken. It's an exercise in gathering your views. Anybody who wants to make their views known can make their views known; and these are all considered by the members of the County Council who make the decision. Our job is to help to reflect those views back. It's at the stage where nobody knows what will happen, it is a consultation. We want to hear your views. It ends on August 6th, so any forms not filled in, get those back to us, and you can do that either by using the form at the back of the consultation document – which I think you've all had, but we can let you have another one, if you speak to Karen – or you can go to the website, and fill in the form on there, and read all about it on there as well. At this stage we now open the floor to you, to ask questions, and again, if I could ask you to use the microphones, so that everybody can hear, and so that all your comments will be recorded for the local members. Okay, thank you very much.

Q1 Good afternoon. I think [unclear].

PD I was trying to explain to you it is a consultation, and the decisions haven't been taken. So while we, as officers, have to say, look, this is our preferred option, the decision is for the County Councillors to take at the Cabinet meeting. People's views are important, because they're the views that the County Councillors would listen to in taking their decisions. For example, if we'd have gone out to consultation saying, this is our preferred option, but the majority of people said, oh no, you've got that wrong, it ought to be something else, then the County Councillors would take that into consideration. I mean, this isn't a referendum. The numbers of votes aren't counted up, and whoever counts the most votes wins, sort of thing. The issue is about putting forward the arguments, and the issues, so that, when the County Councillors take their decisions, they do so in the light of better knowledge, and local knowledge, and what parents and other people really think. It is important that

everybody has his or her say. It's up to the County Councillors what they decide. I would say, in about one in three cases, the proposals that we put forward, the County Council don't move forward on, because other arguments have come in, and they take a view about that. As Janet has said, since we've issued our consultation document, people have been saying to us, why can't you close both schools? I'm sure that that's coming through in the written representations as well. We will have to advise the County Councillors on those issues as well. It's about cogent arguments, and the reasons that people give, which will influence the County Councillors' decision. But here, today, I can honestly say to you, I don't know what their decision will be. As I say, in one in three cases, they don't go forward with a proposal, even if it's a preferred option, for whatever reasons are put forward on the day.

Q2 Is this an educational decision or is this a housing decision? Because in regards to the [unclear].

JR Thank you for your question. The situation is, if one school closes, and the other school becomes empty, therefore, first of all we would open that up to other services of the County Council, to see if any other service wanted to use that building to provide services for you in this area, whatever those services were. That's the procedure we have to go through. If no other service wanted the building, only then could it be considered a sale, for development. Another of the laws that's changed, relatively recently, is to do with building on former schools. The situation, the law, is, now you can only build on the footprint of the building. So the school fields would remain as school fields; only the building and the hard area of the school could be used for housing.

PD I think it's fair to say that the County Council is not [unclear] a housing authority. They don't take decisions about education based on whether they want to do things for housing or not. The decisions will be taken on the basis that there just aren't enough pupils needing a school place on the Jackmans Estate, and we don't need two whole schools. It's as simple as that.

Q3 What I'm saying is ... [unclear]. If you shut down schools surely you'll then put a strain on this one or ...[unclear].

JR Perhaps I didn't answer that little bit of it. When we reduce surplus places, we always leave enough surplus places to allow for parental preference, and to allow for if people move into the area. The audit commission recommended 10% surplus places. In the proposals that we've got here, we're leaving 12%, it's certainly more than the 10%. That leaves an even greater margin for anybody who moves into the area. I think, sometimes, when you see a lot of housing going up, it's difficult to think how many pupils that would generate. We have a rule of thumb that might help to put that in perspective. In that, 1,000 houses equals one form of entry; so for every 1,000 houses, you'd expect that to generate 30 pupils per year group. So when you're talking about the small number of houses, or flats, or whatever they were, that would fit on to the footprint of a school, you're not talking about very large numbers. But if the point came where, say, on the edge of a town, the government had

decided that large numbers of houses should be built, then they would generate the need for their own school. Under something called Section 106 agreements, developers have to provide funding. So, if there was a large development, of 1,000 or 2,000 houses, that would generate its own school, with funding from developers, in that area. It wouldn't impact on the school that you had in this area. Even if it did, the people living round this school would get first chance for the places, because of the admission rules which would cover that.

PD I think it's also just worth pointing out that both school sites, both Lannock's site and Radburn's site, is big enough to sustain a two form entry school. So, if at any time in the future, the circumstances changed, and more children were on the estate wanting a place at a school on the estate, it would be possible to expand the building, so that the school could become larger.

Q4 There's a theme to the questions isn't there? [unclear]. I mean one in three... My main concern...[unclear].

PD As Janet has said, one of the reasons why we've said, from our perspective, the retention of Radburn School is our preferred option, is because of those other users. So there are no plans to move...

Q4 [Unclear.]

PD I take your drift. I think what you're asking me is, if, for example, this school closed and the PSB was located here, the PSB would still be a service that would be required to serve the children, both in this area and in others. And therefore, we would need to move that PSB to the remaining school. Therefore, the staffing as such would be needed in relation to the Primary Support Base.

Q4 What about class sizes?

PD Oh, class sizes. You've seen the numbers there. Certainly, at key stage one - the government have a key stage one class size pledge, that says, there should be no more children than 30 to a teacher, and any other support staff, in a class. But it's for the management of the school to manage the classes, and I am absolutely confident that they're not going to have big classes. It's not that we're putting all the children in and, off the top of my head, there might be 37 Year 3 children. It doesn't mean to say all 37 children are going to be in the same class. It will be for the management of this school, having discussed with the management of the other school, or vice versa, just what the needs of those children are, and what's the best way of organising the classes. But there wouldn't be large classes in that way, I wouldn't expect them too, anyway.

Q5 And, going back to about Lannock closing [unclear] closing, will we not end up with the situation like what we had when, obviously this is going back to when we had [unclear] Norton [unclear] when it preferred to close it, it did, and not many years later, Norton closed anyway. So would we not end up with that same sort of situation as we did then? The children then had to be scattered here, there and everywhere [unclear].

PD I hear what you say. The issue about whether you have a school or not is whether there are children needing to come to the school, and wanting to come to the school. When we had those discussions with those other people in January and February, as Janet said, people were quite concerned that what we would be proposing was that there wouldn't be a school at all on the Jackmans Estate. I think, almost to stakeholder, everybody has come forward and said there really does need to be a school on the Jackmans Estate. The issue is everybody, virtually to a person, said, but there probably only needs to be one school. And it needs to be a one FE school. Now, there would be no reason to suggest a further closure, down the line, unless, for some reason, nobody lived on the estate, and nobody wanted a school place. Personally, I can't see that happening. But we propose school closures usually for two reasons. One is because there aren't enough pupils, or two, because the standards are such that the situation is untenable. But even in those circumstances, if we've got a school that's struggling in that way, we would be doing everything to make sure that that improved, rather than close the school. Especially if it was in the heart of a community, where they needed school places.

Q5 Right, thanks. Also going back to when the [unclear] about class sizes. Some of the class sizes now seem to be over 30. My worry is are we going to end up like [unclear] who said he wouldn't let it exceed but if we've already got classes nearly exceeding 30 now, and with two schools going into one, you are going to have a problem. I think we really don't need these bigger classes because the children need a small size to get the full learning ability that they can. And [unclear] are they going to break it up then and make it into two years of one year, and then the size, as you say, the schools [unclear] are going to be affected as well.

PD Sure. If you look at the pupil numbers that are on the form, it's quite clear that, in the upper year groups, there are going to be more than 30 children, if every single parent of the closing school wanted their child to transfer to the other school. We've said we'll guarantee that we can make that happen for them, if that's what they want. But they can also go to other schools, if there are places in the right year group available; that's their choice. We would then work with the management of the school. They would take a view about what is the best way of organising that number of pupils. They're unlikely to say, we've got 37 children, we need them all in one class. I think we'd probably be advising them against that, quite frankly. Therefore, if they have to break the classes down in a different way – that's what Janet was talking about - we would have to make the accommodation available, so that those classes will have a space to do so. We're not expecting that to have to happen for very long though, simply because the numbers coming in in the reception classes now are less than 30. So over a period of time, in two years' time or maybe three years' time, there would be 30 or under children in every year group, and therefore, there would be a class every year group.

Q6 First of all, [unclear] decision... [unclear].

PD We issued the consultation document in May, and that went home to everybody in the schools affected. We've had public meetings at each school, where we've taken people through these slides. And we have responded to the

request for an additional meeting during the daytime, so that people who didn't get to the last meetings had an opportunity to come. So I think the information has been there from day one, quite frankly. We're doing what we're doing now, as Janet said, this is the consultation period, and we're taking the opportunity to come and talk to you here, and take you through it, in a little bit more care [?].

Q7 [Unclear.]

PD We're proposing to close one, or the other, of the two schools. Therefore, all the children in the closing school will need to go somewhere, and what we've said is that we'll make those places available, in the remaining school. Let's take our preferred option. If Lannock School closes, we will say to the parents of the Lannock children, if you wish to, we will make sure your child has a place at Radburn School. That means that the management and the governors of this school will have more people to educate, and they'll have to organise so they can do that in an efficient and effective way. So yes, there will be more children, but we're not proposing to close both schools, just one. And therefore, the management of this school will organise the classes, and the numbers of pupils in those classes, so that they can continue to deliver the good education they already do.

Q8 [Unclear]... most people here think that [unclear].

PD I hear what you say. I can only repeat what I've said before. When we've made proposals before - in the last 18 months, two years - one in three of the proposals that we have come forward with have not ended up with the outcome of the proposal. And that's quite a high percentage. I can honestly assure you, it's not a done deal, this is a genuine consultation.

WD I know some of you have got to go in a minute because you'll be worried about your children, who would look after them, don't worry, we won't let them escape. I just want to say, really, that we have tried to get you to come to the meeting, because we need County to know that we want Radburn to remain the school that remains open. And yes, there are issues to work out, there are issues of numbers, and what I can say is that I am working really hard, with the governors of the school, to make it be Radburn that stays open. We want your support for that; but also, to ensure that your children aren't affected by that. That we maintain a high quality education for everyone. And I will be battling all the way to get that. I'll be battling and don't miss it [?], for extra money during that transition period, so that we have extra staffing, and that we can do that, very successfully. And there's a real determination to make it work, and to bring the Children's Centre here, so we have extended facilities available. So actually, in the end, it's better for everyone. And that's what we're really working to. And that's why we've asked you to come, to show County that we've got parents behind us, and to see a visible presence, and I know a lot of you have already completed consultations forms. I just wanted to put it in perspective really, what the governors and I are trying to do. We're thinking about the education of your children, all the way through it.

Q9 I've got just a few points really rather than questions. I've read the documents and I think it's an argument that [unclear]. Being a Radburn parent and read the documents, I think the right option has been identified, and I think that's in terms of the notion in terms of what percentage are that [unclear] buildings as well. We've got the Opportunity Classes here; we've got the two extended services that come on [unclear]. There was some talk previously about stress and disruption caused by this whole process. I think [unclear] and I'd like to think that we do need to get this stuff [unclear]. ... A lot of stress and disruption is going to be caused about people's [unclear] and that's why I was a little bit surprised to hear about this amalgamation proposal [unclear]. There are more pupils here at Radburn...[unclear].

Q10 [Unclear]...the correct one to choose.

PD ... you don't have to persuade me. You have to make your points, in your responses, whichever way you want to do it, it doesn't matter, so that the County Councillors get to hear them, and that influences their decision making. Our job is to read all of your responses, to analyse the issues and the comments that you've made, and to put those forward in a report that will go that Panel, and that Cabinet meeting that Janet referred to earlier on. We also make every single one of your responses available to all the County Councillors, so that they can go and read them first hand. And the reason we're having these recordings, and we'll have a transcript of this meeting, is so that those decision makers can hear first hand, and read first hand, what you were saying at meetings. Because we find, sometimes, people don't feel able to speak at a meeting, but can write their points down very clearly, and vice versa. We try to maximise the opportunity for the County Councillors that will consider the proposals, so that they're in no doubt as to how you feel about the proposals. The important thing is that you make that known. Either by coming to meetings like this, and filling out the forms or writing letters, and making it clear what your views are.

Q11 Just one last point on that. The one in three chance doesn't sound great [?] to me either. But obviously [unclear] but from your experiences today, and the contacts you've had with people, has anyone said anything to you, has anyone come forward, with a cogent argument that you haven't thought of, that has made you think, I'll get back to the drawing board on this one.

PD The only thing that's happened since we put out the proposals is the request, by other people, to consider the closure of both schools. Had the County Council have wanted to have put that forward, it would have done. But now that somebody has put it forward, clearly we have to advise the County Councillors of that, and to explore the issues and the arguments that people have put forward. So that is a new issue that's come on to the table since the consultation document. We will have to report that back, and explore the issues that people have raised, and some of the timing issues, and the procedural issues, that that would take on. That's the only thing that has changed. But it's not for me to decide whether that's the right thing, or not, to do. Okay? Thanks so much for coming along. As I said, it is important that we do hear what you have to say and appreciate your time.