

Hoddesdon St Catherine's

Speaker key

JW	Jane Wilson [?]
LM	Lindsay Martin [?]
UM	Unidentified male speakers
UF	Unidentified female speakers
AT	Alan Taylor
W	Wayne [?], Head of St Catherine's school
P	Paul
A	Alistair

JW Good evening, my name is Jane Wilson and I'm here to facilitate this evening [inaudible] at various [?] schools in the area to facilitate the [?] consultation [?] [programme/progress?]. [inaudible] mothers [?] and their [?] children and if [inaudible] so that you know that your views are being said [?] and represented by an independent agency. And the way we're going to run this evening is that [inaudible] is here [?] to [inaudible] a short presentation and then after the presentation there will be questions from the floor. Also I'd like to tell you that after the [inaudible] but will be available [inaudible]. And the other thing that I need to tell you is that [inaudible]. So just to say that [inaudible] independent [?] support [?] but also this meeting is being recorded by [inaudible] and when we take questions from the floor [inaudible] we really [inaudible] what you're going to say so when we get to questions from the floor please wait for your turn [inaudible] that will be transcribed [?] [inaudible] transcript of what we say here tonight. Can I also just ask you to make sure that mobiles [?] are [inaudible]. [inaudible]

LM Good evening. [inaudible] I'm Lindsay Martin, the Head of School Access [inaudible] planning [?] places throughout the county, [commissions/permissions?] and a variety of other things, and I have with me on the panel [inaudible] brains trust [inaudible]. Alistair Day [?] the Senior Primary School Effectiveness Advisor. Then Paul Rain [?] is the Area [?] [inaudible] Manager, and [inaudible]. [inaudible] are the two members of my team who have been working on the detail of this [inaudible] and they will be helping me to answer your questions and to provide you with information. And Alistair will be taping [inaudible]. Alistair will [inaudible] be answering any questions you might have about standards [?], curriculum [?] [inaudible]. And I'll keep this as short as I can because I know it's your [?] [inaudible] and this is your opportunity [inaudible] rather than ours. I guess you've all had a chance to look at the consultation document. So I hope I'm not going to say anything which will be inconsistent with what is in there.

The purpose of the review [?] day [?] is because we have a lot of surplus places [inaudible], and when we come in to the subsequent [?] [inaudible] you'll get an idea of the volume [inaudible]. [inaudible]. So what's the problem you might say. It might be a good thing [inaudible] places [inaudible] that's better, isn't it? Actually, no it isn't because the way schools are funded throughout the country is that A to

Z [?] fund [inaudible] school goes with pupil numbers, the more pupils you have the more money you get, the few pupils you have the less money you get. So schools tend to find themselves with considerable difficulties if the numbers go down. Also we are spending money at [?] the county council on keeping empty places open [inaudible] costs [inaudible] and that's hardly the economical [?] way of saving money, it would be much better if the money went on books and pupils [?] and so forth. So we think that [inaudible] surplus places [inaudible] and also try and arrange school [inaudible] so that it is more cost effective and more efficient. Because educationally [?] we've got to finance it [?]. We also want to check that schools are not being adversely affected by falling pupil numbers because that in itself can have an [inaudible]. Small schools would mean smaller staff complements, maybe a smaller range of specialties, maybe fewer curriculum opportunities. But Alistair can tell you more about that if we get into that area. And as I said before we want to make sure we use the limited [?] objectives [?] most effectively and most efficiently for the education of your children. [inaudible] purpose of the review [?] this gives you an idea so that you can see the slightly [?] [inaudible]. At the moment we've got [inaudible] reception places in the schools in the area, and we currently have only got 416 children [inaudible] and that represents an [inaudible] of 18.3%. [inaudible] and we're forecasting that that's going to go down a bit more over the next five years. Not actually going down as much as the decline in some other parts of the country because there's a certain amount of house building going on which counterbalances [?] the demographics of birth decline, but the country hasn't [?] as a whole. But nevertheless some [inaudible] we estimate [inaudible] which will [?] leave a bit over 100 reception places empty, which is more than 20% [?]. And if you express that [inaudible] what we call forms of entry, that is 30 [?] children [inaudible]. [inaudible] but if you calculate the numbers into forms of entry [inaudible] represents 3.9 [?] and 109 [?], 3.6 [?] [inaudible], that is just over three and a half forms [?] of empty places [inaudible]. That's what the numbers are telling us. And there it is summarised in slightly larger [inaudible] forms of entry, there [?] are only three places surplus in reception. 109 places – and [removing/we move?] [inaudible] places which is what we have said we [inaudible] this area [?] as a whole leaves just [inaudible]. Now, you will see if you read this print underneath that [inaudible] which is the Government's spending watchdog suggests that a surplus of between 5% and 10% [inaudible] should be aimed for. Now, [inaudible] a bit outside that range. Yes, we are, that's true, and I will explain in a moment how [inaudible] the options that are proposed dealing with the fact that if [?] we lose [three/these?] forms of entry the surplus is at the bottom end of the recommended rates. Why is having a surplus important, you may say. Surely your target should be to have no surplus at all, then you may be your most efficient [inaudible], why [inaudible] 5%, 10%? Well, there are a number of reasons, one is that forecasting is not an exact science, if it was it wouldn't be a forecast, we would know the numbers, we wouldn't have to forecast them. So you need a bit of a margin in an area in case your forecast is not – as it's unlikely to be – 100% accurate. That's one reason. The other reason is to do with arrangements [?] [inaudible] places. [inaudible] absolutely necessary [?], if you [inaudible] exact amount [?] between the numbers [?] of children [?] and the numbers of places then parents get very little [inaudible] choice because effectively you've got to go to the nearest school because the places are so tight that's the only opportunity that you've got. If you [inaudible] some surplus in the system you assist parent choice because then [?] [inaudible] there are some empty places, parents can choose to go to a school which is not

necessarily their nearest. So [inaudible] recommendation [inaudible] have to balance [?] the efficiency [inaudible] places full [?] [inaudible] with allowing a reasonable measure [inaudible]. And that is about [inaudible] try to keep. And I'll say a little bit more about that when we come to the [inaudible]. [Protests/Form tests?] [inaudible] any opting [?] for change we feel has to work [?] and we have developed these over the last [two/three?] years doing these [?] in other areas. And those are obviously [reduce/produce?] surplus places and provide places where they're needed, that's what we've just been talking about, enhance the [inaudible] reduce this amount [inaudible]. We feel that the schools which are [inaudible] numbers [?], that is the pupils [?], are more likely to [inaudible] than would [?] choose to not [inaudible] drop in numbers and have [?] the [?] selected [?] places. [inaudible] we scheduled [?] in present [?] building [?] [inaudible], building design, [inaudible] and [inaudible] arrangements [?] [inaudible]. Okay. So [inaudible] you will have seen [?] in the consultation document item one is the county council's preferred [inaudible] scheme [?] [inaudible] is [?] essentially [?] why [inaudible] and you could say that [inaudible] always [?] try [?] to [inaudible] buffer [?] [inaudible] because we need certain [inaudible] that 4% [?] [inaudible] possible [?] [inaudible]. Option two, which is [inaudible] important [?], you need [inaudible]. If you compare that, obviously with that, it involves [unclear]. Two and a half times the number [?] of schools are involved and [inaudible] why [inaudible]? The reason is that we feel that option one leaves [?] a lot better range of provisions [?], it leaves much better sized [?] schools than with option two. It looks as though more [?] is involved but it gives us, we think, a better outcome. And that's [unclear] you may wish to talk about that during the evening. Option three is sort of a bit between the two of options one and two, [inaudible] and improvements [?] in capital. So just for your information our proposals for the [inaudible] day [?] that we [?] [inaudible] that's out [?] of the area [?], is [inaudible]. [inaudible] meeting [?] in a area we concentrate on that particular area. I think we should see that will [?] complete [?]. So [inaudible] additional [inaudible] pupils. Under [?] [inaudible] so the shares [?] may be [inaudible] and if [inaudible] people know [inaudible]. [inaudible] August [2008/2010?] it [?] would not admit new [?] pupils, [inaudible] pupils in September 2007. Pupils [inaudible] is continued there until the end of the summer term [inaudible]. No [inaudible] has been provided which [inaudible] at the end of 2007, but by [inaudible] places and [inaudible] until [inaudible] just telling some people all about [inaudible]. So that's potentially [?] where [?] we [?] see [?] the process of [unclear]. This is still [inaudible], still the range of [inaudible], but why doesn't [?] this [inaudible] make all pupils and [?] in both [?] schools [?] [inaudible] parents [could/couldn't?] find the places in the schools [inaudible] places available [inaudible]. But [inaudible] offer of a place here [?], the parents [inaudible]. And the [inaudible] provide certain places [inaudible] in order that you would go down one form of entry from one and a half forms of entry. Okay. Option two, much of it the same as option one. [inaudible] pupils [inaudible] in 2010 [?] [inaudible] but in order [?] to take [?] places again [?] [inaudible]. Then with [?] the numbers [?] [inaudible]. And then in September 2008 [inaudible]. And option three [inaudible] August 2008 but again you'd [?] have [?] to accept [?] new pupils in 07 [?] [inaudible]. And this one [inaudible] in [August/almost?] all pupils [inaudible] to get a place somewhere else. So what happens next? We're having public meetings at the moment. [inaudible] but literally [inaudible] and then come back to us. The aims [?] of consultation [inaudible] is 29th July. So [inaudible] 29th June, the public meetings have [?] gone [?] on to 29th June, but the consultation period lasts until 27th July. So that is when you have to get your response [?] form

in, letters, e-mails [inaudible] what you would like to let us know what you think to us by that date, 27th July. The education [?] panel will then look at the results of that on 30th [?] September and then the Cabinet, which is the decision making body [inaudible] make the decision on what [inaudible] to do. [inaudible] and if necessary [inaudible] committee which is an independent commission [?] [inaudible] will consider the matter and make the decisions in January 07 unless [?] we get [inaudible] of the public. So [inaudible] this is in no sense a done deal, members have [seven/several?] times in the past changed their proposals in the light [?] of public consultation [inaudible]. We do want to hear your views, you've got until 27th July [inaudible]. [inaudible] hand back to Jane.

JW Thank you very much for that [inaudible] and now [inaudible] you [?] on the floor to ask [inaudible] how [inaudible]. Just before you [inaudible] I want to reiterate the fact that we are recording and so [inaudible]. If you feel at the end of the evening that you haven't been able to get your point across then you can e-mail and you can go on to the web site as well [inaudible]. [inaudible] hand over to the floor. So has anybody got a first question?

UM My name is [inaudible]. [inaudible] coming up [inaudible] and secondly North Hertfordshire Council [inaudible].

LM I didn't catch that. Sorry.

UM All the councillors [?] [inaudible] member [?] of the committee [inaudible] that has come up with [inaudible]. [inaudible] next question is [inaudible] in terms of ever-increasing [inaudible]. [overlapping] [inaudible] And the last question [inaudible] may not be advanced [?] [inaudible] I'll certainly be e-mailing [?] [inaudible]. And the last question is, no [?] doubt [?] [inaudible] substantially increased the contribution [inaudible] education [inaudible]. [inaudible] [of/for?] spending that money [inaudible] and capital expenditure [inaudible]. [inaudible]

LM Okay. Thanks for the interesting questions, and as you say, they are [inaudible] inter-related [?]. I think [inaudible]. I think one survey, I think what you're referring to probably is our annual forecast of pupil numbers. Every year we undertake a forecast of pupils in each area of the County Council. We don't [?] [inaudible] we forecast by planning area [?] because once you get down to the size of a single school, particularly the small schools, forecasting – as any statistician will tell you – the smaller the numbers involved the more difficult the forecasting is. And some schools are [inaudible] are so small [inaudible] primary school, that it's impossible to forecast [inaudible]. So you forecast areas, and you do that every year, and that's what I think you're referring to in terms of the survey [?]. It is published in the sense that the forecast goes to [inaudible] organisation committees, which is a committee which is open to the public, and anybody can request a copy of that forecast. I'm not sure that it's actually on our list [?]. No. But it can be requested. Now, that forecast takes into account a number of factors. It takes into account live birth data that we get from [inaudible] by geographical area, so it counts live births and takes those into account in the forecast. That's why we only forecast five years ahead because if you could work backwards more than five years from the start of primary school the children haven't been born so you can't count them. Even we don't know what people's intentions are. The second limitations [?] for the county is house building, we receive from the ten [?] district

councils in Hertfordshire information about planning applications and numbers of units, and we have a formula for calculating how many children are generated by different types of housing [inaudible], one-bedroom flats, two-bedroom flats, three-bedroom houses and so on. Historically it's quite easy to count that, and then calculate how many children are likely to be generated from particular developments. So every year we gather up all the data [?] from district councils and planning applications and numbers of units, put that in to our forecast, so all the housing which has reached a development stage is already in a forecast, it's already in the figures. [inaudible] figures that I gave earlier in the presentation. So when I said, this is what we forecast for 2011 we have included in that forecast all known housing developments [unclear] numbers of units. Now, just out of interest, it takes about 1,000 houses to generate [unclear] schools, in other words 30 children in each year group, which is 210 children at primary stage, for example, and then obviously 150+ at the secondary stage. Those are the numbers of children it takes about 1,000 houses, and considerably more flats, to produce. The numbers of houses that you can build on a re-developed primary school site, taking that as an example, is really quite small. So it's often at these meetings people say to us, but you're proposing to close this school, you'll build houses on the school site and that would fill out the very places that you've taken away. But that doesn't really happen because these days the only bit of a former school site that gets built on is the [ground/brown?] [unclear] part of the site, that is the site of the existing buildings. The playing fields are protected by both central government and town planning legislation. So the numbers of housing units you can get on a typical primary school site is about 40 units. And remember I said it takes 1,000 units to fill one [unclear] school. So 40 units is a very small addition to the numbers of pupils. But the last part of the question is about budget capital. I think what we might have in mind [?] [inaudible] in the budget, more [?] capital expenditure for primary schools. That comes on stream in the financial year 2009, 2010, so it's about three years away before that programme starts. And that programme is designed largely to refurbish existing schools. It allows for only 5% of primary schools in the authority's area to be rebuilt and about 45% to be refurbished. That's the nature [?] of the programme. I think that may be the one that you had in mind.

UM Yes.

LM Okay.

JW Thank you very much. Next question?

UF [inaudible] question, albeit a very brief one. You referred to the fact that a drop in numbers equals a drop in budget, and may have an impact on quality of learning, quality of teaching, standards, etc. However, I know for a fact that there are a significant number of heads within this authority that have sent [unclear] school budgets with deficit. So heads are becoming more and more creative in terms of bringing money into their school, or indeed being very creative and coming up with [inaudible] initiatives to promote their schools and utilise their school space. So in keeping with the extensive [?] school [?] agenda [?] and the children's [inaudible] agenda [?], if it is that we will have surplus [inaudible] we're coming into an era where they could be really utilised and used for other [?] activities [?] [inaudible] facilities [?] being as primary schools would need to be

open and [inaudible] 2008 [?], and yet possibly at [?] a [?] cost to the LEA in terms of [inaudible]. It sounds a very long one, but that's my point. Number two. If there is a change of government and possibly a change of policy, and if in their wisdom one day they will be advised [?] to [inaudible] then if they actually come up with the acknowledging an awful lot of research that says if you reduce the ratio of qualified practitioner to children they [inaudible] long ago that the 30 [?] in a foundation [?] stage, so the reception, is not best practice, that they reduce it. If they do then [inaudible] may [?] refer [?] originally [?] [inaudible] if they've actually [inaudible]. Thirdly, and this one you may need to do some homework and come back with, that's not me being rude you just may not have the information there, of the area reviews that have happened in the last years or so I'd be very interested to find out if the centres [?] of them have had the LEA preferred option overruled.

LM We haven't always had a preferred option, though. That's the thing. There hasn't always been one.

UF Okay. The final one. Of the one that did have a preferred option [overtalking]... and the last one, and really this is just an observation rather than really requesting a response is [inaudible] hearing [?] your presentation, which was very eloquent, and all the information that's come out of the [inaudible] very efficient I know, but it still comes across as if the emphasis is all [inaudible] and not actually about people. As you [inaudible] it really doesn't feel that the child is at the centre or the family is at the centre, and again we're entering an era where that's actually where it shouldn't [?] be about.

LM Yes. In terms of point number one, absolutely, I agree, I think if schools are able to develop activities, expand activities, create other sources of funding, extended schools, the whole Government agenda, that's great. And that's an important factor. Whether that is reliable enough to ensure that schools have a steady and reliable income year on year to maintain their staffing levels is [inaudible] something that schools would have... and need to take a view about. But in principle, yes, that's a good idea. But we have not to lose sight, however, about the original purpose of the school, which is to provide primary school places, and [unclear] we don't build schools in order to provide the community with extended facilities, oh, and then we'll take some primary children. The prime purpose is the other way round and I think we do have to be careful that we don't justify continuing provision on a different basis from the basis that it was put there for in the first place. But I think in principle I agree that the possibility of having other sources of income, other activities and sustaining schools in that way is fine and admirable [?] and I think that's important. Yes, if a change of government – I think you're suggesting that any government might bring reduced class sizes [inaudible], again, yes, that would be great, if somebody can find the money nationally, if the Government find the money nationally to reduce class sizes – I wouldn't like to think what it might cost but of course it depends how much they reduce the size, then you're going to need more spaces, and that's going to be an issue. Now, given that the current Government's programme that I spoke about earlier when I answered the gentleman at the back's question of the budget issue about extra capital money for primary schools, given that in the brochure about that the Government is making it clear that they expect authorities to undertake rationalisation to look at surpluses and not simply to refurbish and rebuild schools wherever they happen to be, the current Government emphasis is clearly – hated

words of the audit commission – it's still along the same lines. A change of government and a change of stance would have to recognise that authorities have followed previous governments drift and intentions and it wouldn't be reasonable of an incoming government to say that we've done everything we were supposed to from the previous government but now of course you're short of X number of classroom spaces. You've got it wrong and we've got somehow to find the money to [unclear], I think that would be pretty unreasonable and I suspect actually fairly unlikely that [inaudible] governments tend to do that. Over the last five years what percentage [?] [inaudible] preferred options. Now, I will have to come back to you on that because I really don't know. As I said, not all of our reviews have had preferred options, sometimes we've had just straight alternatives. [inaudible] excellent.

UM Out of the last five two have gone back for different options to be proposed. So two out of five.

LM 40%. Emphasis on money, yes, and I'm sorry about that. The difficulty is that I tend to be a local government officer in a suit and standing at the front dressed like this, because that's the job I do. But I mean I've been in the education service I dare say longer than you [unclear], and that's a compliment. But seriously this is about children actually. The *raison d'être*, the whole point of this exercise is to make sure that we're spending the limited resources that we've got most effectively on children's education. Now it may be that we have to make some changes, even some financial changes, in order to use the money most effectively, and that might make it seem all about money but the money is the means to an end. We can't educate the children at all if we don't have the money to do it. We simply can't function. So we are trying to make the best use of it, to make it work hardest, in the interest of the children. But we don't have schools for the sake of having schools, we only have them because we have children who need educating. We wouldn't say let's have a nice bright shiny school over there, there are no children there but it looks awfully nice from the outside and it's an architectural gem, that would be utterly pointless. The only reason we do it is because we have children who need educating, and if I've given the impression it's all about money then I'm grateful to you for raising that, if I've given that impression that certainly isn't what it's all about, it's about making the best use of the money for the children.

UM Just going back to the second [?] [inaudible] I'd make a large [inaudible] extending the use of their premises but they don't necessarily need to have spare classrooms to do that so [?] long [?] as they're using their dining [?] room [?] facilities, are using their hall facilities and [inaudible] groups [?] and it doesn't necessarily impact on the teachers' classrooms.

UF No, I can appreciate that, Paul, but picking up on your point [unclear] about schools being a purpose [?] for education, yes, but we are entering into a whole new era, and it's going to have to be an incredible mind shift on the part of practitioners, the teachers, heads, and officers, and parents, because [inaudible] huge [?] [inaudible] education and it'll be coming together big time. So that our schools will not necessarily be the schools of our past. And so therefore to say that schools are built to educate children is true in part, but actually it's gone beyond that brief and the Government at the end of it for it to go beyond that brief. It's still

education but not in the context of nine to three thirty, and to embrace the family, and to embrace the children [inaudible]. Now, on the subject again of the budget and I know [?] [inaudible] but [inaudible] the rule [?] breaker [?], that [?] either we're [?] going to [inaudible] but certainly the last three years I have been able to generate money into our school big time and which has meant that we protect ourselves [?]. And yet we have a shortfall of what the LEA give us for our school [inaudible] each year. We are a 120 place [inaudible] school but we now work with 120 children on the roll and 307 [?] others, and we get no money or funding whatsoever for those 307 others that access our services. Why? Because we've been creative, we've been [inaudible] showing our initiative and [inaudible] make some money which has meant that we have maintained our books. And the quality of provision [?], well, I hope people here read our name in the paper often enough to know that it's outstanding. And therefore that's what we're talking about, it's already going on in these schools and potentially going on in [?] even more. And it may be that out of the ashes comes the phoenix that heads are incredibly even more creative than they have ever been before because of the potential to be.

JW [inaudible] could we now move on please?

AT My name is Alan Taylor, I come from Higher Broxbourne [inaudible] school. My concern is your future forecasts. Waiting in the shadows is the Government's plans for the East of England Regional Assembly, yet to be decided. The last statistics I was aware of is that the borough of Broxbourne is required to build 5,100 dwellings by 2021, so as the plans have not been imposed [?] upon Broxbourne so Broxbourne Council know how many numbers they've got to build. That is one part of the question, question B is I've not heard any reference to the movement of labour from the European [inaudible] commissions, which now exist. The free movement of labour will allow people to come into the area with families, their children will want education. You have no statistics for that, have you? Thank you.

LM No, we haven't, but they can only come into houses which are there. So let's put on one side the first half of the question, although I will come back to that. If housing numbers stayed the same as they are now then any incoming family would displace somebody who's already here so there wouldn't be any net effect. But I think the first part of your question, the regional spatial strategy, which I presume is its complete name, which I think is the document you're referring to, does indeed give each district council housing targets. And I suspect, Alan [?], you might know more about this than I do so I'm going to tread cautiously here. The difficulty is, yes, there is a target of 5,000 or whatever it is, for Broxbourne by 2021, which is 15 years away. That [unclear] spread out and up to quite a long time in the future. If let us say all 5,000 houses, or even two or three [unclear] of those 1,000 houses were built all in one place then the planning gain [?] contribution by the developer – the so-called Section 106 income for the County Council would pay for a whole new school. That would be enough to build a new school because roughly 1,000 houses is one form of entry – and you wouldn't expect to build one form of entry primary school because [inaudible] one form of entry school to be somewhat [inaudible] with these numbers, but if anything from 2,000 houses upwards were built in one place we would expect the master plan for that development to include a new primary school. So in a sense that wouldn't impact on it, it would be self contained, it wouldn't impact on the figures that we

have here. The only major difficulty we'd have is if all 5,000 were spread somehow very evenly across the borough in insufficient concentrations for there to be a new school justified in any one particular place. That could possibly give us a problem over a 15-year period. To be honest I think that's quite unlikely to happen, but I can't give you a definitive answer because it's at such an early stage of development, like 5,000 houses in 15 years, that we don't know enough about where they're going to be. Now, as I mentioned Forays [?] earlier, we do have some cushion there to take some more pupils and it may be that other schools on other sites in the area of expandable beyond their current numbers in the future if need be. And of course we have from 2009 Government money to rebuild 5% and refurbish proper [?] primary schools. So I think to sum all of that up I think I wouldn't want to fix our current schools [?] in the current places in their current buildings, necessarily, for the next 15 years, I would want the possibility of new schools, major refurbished schools, maybe schools in different places, to reflect the movement of population and the building of houses. But I think before [?] [inaudible] keeping in mind the regional spatial strategy and what might emerge from that is obviously very important in everything [?] that we do on an annual basis.

UF My concern is that [inaudible] choice [?] because when I looked – I'm a County Councillor [?] [inaudible] to the County Council and I was given figures to call [?] for the applications [?] towards [?] schools in the area. So I looked down to see which schools were most popular in this area and I see of the schools that are under subscribed [?] in the area St Catherine's [?] is one of them. Now, I'm not saying anything against St Catherine's, and I agree [inaudible] are very good and I'm a great believer in faith schools, but you are actually offering St Catherine's as an alternative for the parents of Roselands [?] and Wexfield [?] and they may not wish to go to a faith school. So I wonder what other alternatives they're being offered other than to go to a faith school. And I wonder how easy it actually is for the Wexfield parents to actually get here. I [inaudible] reasonably well and it doesn't seem to be [inaudible] particular easy to get to [inaudible] I don't know about. One [inaudible] where parents do want to go [inaudible] I think is only one and a half [inaudible], which I thought we weren't keen on at the County Council and I could [?] understand why, had 57 first [?] [inaudible] last year and yet they're proposing keeping that at the 45, so we not enabling [?]... so a lot of parents had to be turned away. I also wonder how [inaudible] we had 15 [?] parents [?] turned away from [inaudible] are actually going to find a school because Forays had about 44 first preferences [?] [inaudible] 45 children, so its numbers are about balanced, and yet they're proposing reducing that school. So I'm just worried about the [inaudible] being [?] offered [?] to pay [?] for that [inaudible]. Thank you.

LM Actually [inaudible] on the [inaudible] point, that we are proposing [inaudible] from one and a half to two forms of entry in the county [?] officers' [?] preferred options.

UF [unclear]

LM Yes. [inaudible] inferred [?] option [inaudible]. That's the second point. On the first point, faith option, I'd like to ask the head of St Catherine's if he would say something about that. He's much better placed to talk about his school than I am.

W Just to clarify on a point of information our school currently is [inaudible] in every year [inaudible] year six. So the information [inaudible] is actually incorrect [inaudible] at the moment [inaudible] apart from year six. And we are a faith school, we are a voluntary controlled [?] Church of England primary school which means that we are not an in-your-face Christian school, but we do offer a caring [?] Christian ethos [?] to our people to [inaudible]. And to cover [?] the amalgamation of our school [?] and half of our children came from places which were not faith schools [inaudible] chose to carry on being at St Catherine's which is a faith school.

LM Thanks Wayne, that's very helpful. But [inaudible] I think the point that you make is something that members will have to bear in mind when they're looking at results of the consultation, it may [?] [inaudible] lots of parents make that sort of point and that becomes a significant response at the consultation then obviously we'll have to take that very much on board. On the Forays point, Paul, could you that?

P I think [unclear] first of all [unclear] the Wexfield parents getting to St Catherine's, one of the things that we found out about St Catherine's is that they have a very good travel plan and they have a significant number of their pupils who actually walk to school. It's hard to believe when you look at it from the outside when you think the school is in the middle of a roundabout [?], but nevertheless they've got a very high percentage that actually walk, and that is something, and some of those pupils obviously come from the area where [?] [inaudible]. So that's [inaudible] as well. As regards Forays, yes we need to be keeping this option as it were to look at the situation if the preferred option were agreed [?] [inaudible], then we'll reduce some of the capacity at that side of the built-up area and we would need to be monitoring that very closely in terms of where they could go to school. What we're saying in the preferred option that initially we would grant all the pupils and [inaudible] a place at St Catherine's if they so wished so that we wouldn't actually put more pressure on Forays at a time when you think we might be able to reduce its capacity [?].

UF I just wanted to reiterate really from the [inaudible] point of view we are part of option one, we are a [unclear] denominational school, we would very much [inaudible] one and a half to form entry and that would also [?] [inaudible] pressure in the area and we are currently over-subscribed [?].

UF I'm [inaudible] and I'm a governor of St Catherine's school. I have a question, with expanding [?] on the LEA's third option St Catherine's would be two form entry in 2007 and [inaudible] as well. My theory [?] is a social one for the children. Would that not mean that the schools that were left with the option of closing would end up being... in the children leaving left right and centre and the schools ending up with very class groups [?] and very... especially [?] broken down. My question is why do we not close the school and expand the schools all in the same September so that especially the children from those schools move together rather than in dribs and drabs?

LM Thank you. That's a very good question and it is an issue which has exercised us in previous reviews. Our experience is that sometimes that happens in schools about which a decision has been made to close. Sometimes parents

flee [?] that school and the school reduces and it becomes difficult. In other cases that doesn't happen if all the parents stick with it and seem determined to stick with it until the official kind of closure. So we've had both of those scenarios happen. But, Paul, would you like to say something about that?

P I think one [?] of the things is that it's very difficult if you're going to do some [inaudible] works at the schools that are [inaudible], it's very difficult to accommodate all of the children who might be coming from closing schools, after that time until all those works have been completed. And usually those works will take well over 12 months to complete. So we've got to try and accommodate the children in the best and the most appropriate place for them during that transition period, which is not an easy period from anybody's point of view, there's no getting away from the fact that there is some pain in all of this to achieve the outcomes that we would want or that we could [inaudible]. But I think that's the point really. But the other thing to say is that if we're actually closing particular schools that inevitably does reduce the possibilities for parents to move their children to other schools particularly in that transition period of time because there won't be as many places available elsewhere for them to go to. Which is very hard.

LM But I think it's a very important point and I think certainly in other reviews, as elected members here, County Councillors here will know, we have monitored quite carefully what's happened in a school during that period of transition, we don't just kind of leave it to the [inaudible] we look very carefully at how the numbers are going. And if necessary give extra support to the schools during that transition period.

UF [inaudible] I think it's important that the [inaudible] Wexfield parents are considered, many of my parents do not wish their children to come to a faith school. [inaudible] also is a very different type of school to Wexfield and I think they [?] view that [inaudible] information into account nor has the fact that our I actually have a full reception class in September and the following year and I think [inaudible] have been a bit [inaudible]. Thank you.

LM No, I think that's very helpful and obviously we'll have equivalent meetings at Wexfield and I've absolutely no doubt that your parents will make those points very forcibly and I would expect them to come through in the consultation responses as well and that's exactly what we want to hear, we want to hear your parents' views as well as the views of parents at all the other schools and that will be taken into account. Thank you.

UF Mine is a logistical question really. If you're quoting [?] two one form entry schools and the [inaudible] pupils and you're only [inaudible] by a half form entry [inaudible] how could [?] you fix that you do [inaudible] close [?] schools [?] [inaudible] will offer them all [inaudible] St Catherine's of [?] their choice? If they [inaudible] and actually if you've got [inaudible] to go but I can get into meetings there [overtalking] applies, you're talking about [inaudible] 1.6 [?] by 12 [?] places and closing a two form entry [unclear] closed [?] system.

LM I think the numbers that you give, I'll ask Paul to come in in just a second. The numbers that you give relating to one form entry [unclear] was assumed that

they are full, but of course they aren't and I think [unclear] he actual numbers for you.

P The thing about this part is that we're saying we would offer places from... for all the children at Wexfield and [inaudible] should that option be [inaudible]. We're [?] saying [?] today [?] we offer [?] to place [?] [inaudible], now there are no [?] mark [?] two [?] to pick [?] up that place, they may choose to look at [inaudible], where we're also proposing [inaudible], just as people from the [inaudible] could look at [inaudible] as well. So there is a possibility, but we've said that we would, during this transition period, that we will provide temporary classroom accommodation, good quality temporary accommodation to ease this transition because we feel largely separating children from their peers we would want wherever possible to move them together. Now, some parents may choose not to take that up but consciously [?] feel we should be offering [?]. And in actual fact there are three year groups which would be difficult then to manage in that they would be larger year groups because they will be, in year six, there would be 34 more children than we would normally have expected at St Catherine's if it's a two form entry school. The year five it would be 13 [?] over the 60 [?], and in year four there would be 24. Those three years groups are the big year groups, but we said we would try to manage that in the best way possible to keep the children together. But at the learning [?] end it's much fewer figures in fact, in year six it will be 20 [inaudible] and there [?] it's nine in the two [?] following [?] year groups that wouldn't be able to be accommodated in the permanent accommodation but would be welcome and accommodated within the schools.

UM The final draft, which is to be published [inaudible]. You talked about the 5,100 homes being built by the year 2021 but [inaudible] published [?] in 2007, development was starting by about 2008 and usually [?] [inaudible] about 300 homes have been built [?]. So [inaudible] that's four years before there'll be enough [?] [inaudible] in school so they will be [inaudible]. We talked about the local government, the local authority, that's Broxbourne, the planning authority not knowing where the homes will be placed. Broxbourne [inaudible] replying [?] to the regional spatial strategy, I don't think as recent [?] as the 2008 Broxbourne will be reviewing [?] [inaudible] locations and [inaudible] just to the west [?] of Broxbourne directly adjacent to [inaudible] school. The fact that [inaudible] will be a test [?] site [?] is not being [inspected/expected?] [inaudible] in the last two or three years. My understanding as [inaudible] has been bought by the local [?] [inaudible]. I would just like to point out East Herts District Council [inaudible] testing [?] about 20,000 homes allocated. Now East Herts [inaudible] boundary [?] between [?] Broxbourne and [unclear] St Mark's Road which is just to the north of Playstone [?] and again there's a large area of [inaudible] and a significant [inaudible] to the north of Royston, which would fill up those in the middle again [inaudible] about 250 [?] [inaudible] per year [unclear] process then those children won't go to [inaudible] I would [?] have [?] thought [?] and therefore [inaudible]. So my whole point is, really, why this waiting to find out [inaudible] of those schemes [inaudible] looking at these [inaudible] locations [?] because I think it's [inaudible].

LM Well, I think that even in 2007 you won't know where all the 5,000 houses are going to go, there certainly isn't going to be, as far as I'm aware, I'm not sure that developments [?] is going tell us where all the 5,000 houses are going to be next Spring [?] when we do [?] the planning [?], it just doesn't work like that. And

even if the development of [unclear] is agonised [?], is identified, and roughly, as you say, 300 houses a year, which is about the optimum that's [inaudible] is taken up we would still to agree [?] the master plan for that development at the beginning as we do in west of Stevenage for 3,600 houses at the moment. And temporary new school provision has to be available in most of the agreements of the [inaudible] from house one onwards and then the developer will build the... cause to be built, not necessarily actually build schools himself, although some do, actually build permanent accommodation when X number of houses has been built. But normally the agreement specifies that we must have temporary accommodation from house one. East Herts District Council of course is waiting for a binding [?] inspector's report at the moment, with local planning [?] and so, you're quite right, we should know... that's now expected in about November, though we expect to get it a little bit early from what I hear. I think that is going to be [inaudible] fairly soon and we obviously do know what evidence is given in that inspector's enquiry, [inaudible] took part in it and know more or less whether [?] [inaudible] likely to bring [inaudible]. I think I would come back to the flexibility that we built into, or will be built into the system here pending the building of any new schools as a result of development, and we would expect that flexibility at a number of schools to be able to cope with the numbers that are not accommodated by building new schools either temporary or permanent depending on which estate it is. But [unclear] and I think those are important points. And I think to just wait, the problem with just waiting is that I'm not convinced we need to just wait until next year. I think to get a clearer picture we'd actually need to wait longer than that, and we've got a certain spaces [?] kind of issue and by those issues right [?] at the moment, and I think it would be irresponsible of us probably to say we need to wait a couple of years longer to find out what's happening in that [inaudible] to be.

UM My question is a little more concerned how you plan to integrate the two [?] schools [inaudible] into this school. And I think my concern is the sudden influx of lots of children mixing all together and how a school will cope [?] with that?

LM I think that's a very good question indeed. And I think it is a question and I'm sure it's a concern, but I think we should also regard it as a question because I think there are things that we can say about that, I think there are things that we can all do to [inaudible] transition works as smoothly as possible. And I think, I mean, I [inaudible] so I'm not going to get away with [inaudible], but Wayne [inaudible] heads might want to say something [inaudible] about how to [inaudible] but I'll start with Alistair, please.

A All right, well I think [inaudible] still taking [?] in a large number of people and clearly the head teacher and staff of that school would be very aware that there would be a need to put in good strategies in order that those children enter the school and in a smooth a way as possible and that they would take account of the kind of difficulties that I think you've got in mind in terms of integration. So it would be very much down to the head teachers of the school to have a plan of action and be clear about what needed to be done in order that those children don't find it a difficult transition and to make sure that those children integrate in the school very successfully. And I think that that would be very much in the mind of any teacher, certainly the head teachers, to make sure that happened.

UM I'm worried [?] about the head [?] of St Catherine's primary school, as many people will be aware we amalgamated two years ago so we're used to managing a period of significant change, being a small infants school and a small junior school [inaudible] primary school. And the most successful things that we did to make this happen and make this smooth [?] actually [?] for the children is that we emphasised from the start we were going to do many things together as a whole school. So by [inaudible] class teacher and doing lots of things together with the whole school helped us to develop identity and make the transition much smoother for the children. I'm not sure parents who went through [inaudible].

UF Adding to that in Cherry B [?] primary school, the head of Cherry B primary. Obviously integration too [?] we have adult child support, peer to peer support, buddy [?] systems, a whole plethora of child to child support and adult to child support that helps all new children integrate pretty seamlessly [inaudible] across the whole school when children join us. I was just going to add another very bland statement, there seems to be an incredible [inaudible] in operation from the children at the school [of/have?] [inaudible] where [inaudible] and for the staff as well and certainly the parents and families [?] should [inaudible] to the LEA to make sure that's part of that care [?] package [?] [inaudible] support [inaudible].

LM I think that's very important and I'll let Alistair to say something about support [?] [inaudible] the schools. Also is our HR, human resources personnel people provide support from the beginning to start going through that kind of change. Also I'll have an opportunity for individual discussions with HR personnel and so on. But I think we have quite a good track record of helping staff through that sort of process of change. Alistair would you say something support for the...?

A Yes. [inaudible] we've got [inaudible] really the crux of the whole matter, i.e. children and what was in their best interests. Now, I know that the quality of relationships within school is absolutely key to the current achievement and attainment and progress that pupils make. So I know that head teachers and teachers have a real vested interested in making sure that the quality of relationships are very good for those children coming in from another school. Now, for those children where the school is closing and [inaudible] time when things can be a bit more difficult there I feel that we also need to be able [?] to [inaudible] plan about how we're going to support that school, support those children to ensure that they don't get any form of diminished quality of education. And one of the things that the LEA would be doing is ensuring that the school effectively [?] [inaudible] the link [?] school effectively if this applies to those schools work very close to the head [?] [inaudible] see what is [inaudible] helping to identify them and looking to see what positive actions can be put in place.

UM I was just going to say that since [inaudible] headmasters' conference. [inaudible]

UF [inaudible] afraid [?] of being outspoken [inaudible] I think my point, making it pretty clear, I'm really [?] [inaudible] that the LEA should be thinking in terms of the schools and the space within those schools could be used for the [inaudible] for the benefit to the families and [families/standard?] rule [?] and we've got [?] to do that for them [?].

UM I'll just go back to when you said that if a school was closed the actual demolished school building would be classed as a brown-field site, which I understand, but you did imply that the playing field would not be developed. Can you give me any idea what the use then would be of an empty building and...?

LM We would normally maintain it as playing field and normally with community availability so it becomes a community resource or a community facility. And in some cases we've operated it ourselves, in some cases – this being Broxbourne and knowing how strong their leisure services area is it may be that Broxbourne would like to manage playing fields as community playing fields. Or we would involve and establish clubs in doing so, or indeed do it ourselves.

UM And definitely wouldn't [?] be sold [?] on to [inaudible]?

LM Absolutely. Both central government, the Department of Education and Schools, has a very rigid process of approval for any sale, which would mean replacement, in other words they would not normally give you consent to dispose of playing fields without replacement, and we don't need a replacement because the schools already have their playing fields. Similarly the local town planning process, as [inaudible] that Sport England are a statutory consultee of the proposals and they will object to any proposals to [inaudible] playing fields which don't involve replacement facilities, like [inaudible] on a like-for-like basis. So we don't [inaudible] that these days we don't even try to develop playing fields, it just isn't worth the effort of trying to get planning permission on playing fields.

UM [inaudible] develop back gardens.

LM But playing fields are not back gardens, you see. Playing fields are designated as playing fields and they get very special protection as other sorts of open space don't get, and sometimes it's taken to some extremes. We had development turned down for bits of playing field which have never actually been playing fields, they've been open space, on the grounds that they could have been playing fields, even though they weren't, and we couldn't get [inaudible] to develop on them. And it's tighter than it used to be, [inaudible] longer than me will remember that five or more years ago playing fields were being developed, but the world has changed and you just can't do it.

UF Looking at the options that we can see [inaudible] counties [?], [inaudible] Forays primary school [inaudible] one and a half form entry [inaudible] need to be removed. I just wondered why that was discarded? I know you [inaudible] concern about [inaudible] being a one form entry, but [inaudible] in a one form entry [inaudible] anyway.

LM Yes, you're thinking [?] of option D [?] [inaudible]. I'll let Paul say something about that. I'm sure he'd like to, but just to say a couple of more general points about one form entry schools, one of our principles is that we [inaudible] the organisation of any sort, one like this or one [inaudible], we would try to create two form entry schools because we believe they are the most viable site. That's not to say that a one form entry school, which we believe has a buoyant [?] future and is going to be made full [?] as an one form entry, it's going to be a problem. So we're not going round the county automatically [inaudible], it rather depends on the

circumstances which that one form entry school finds itself. One form entry schools generally are more vulnerable to reductions and to change than larger schools. So that's the sort of principally bit. Paul, do you want to say a little bit more about QD [?] in particular on the appendix? This is in the appendix to the consultation document, for those of you who might not know what we're talking about here.

P One of the other things that we really looked at closely was the geographical spread of schools that we'd be left [?] with [?] and whether they were in the right location to serve the community, and there are more children to the north of Hoddesdon, so the Roselands, Cranbourne [?], Forays area is the area where we have [inaudible] school population [inaudible]. And therefore we looked at that in relation to a [inaudible] leaving [?] the distribution of schools as the [inaudible] where the children are.

UF [inaudible] as I say [?] we are very full [?] [inaudible] school, we've got 312 children at the moment and [inaudible], so I do [?] think that [inaudible] school [inaudible] I don't think it would be sensible to close it, obviously that's a very personal opinion.

LM Yes, I think that [inaudible] it is a [inaudible] school [inaudible] entry, clearly the issue about [inaudible] entry is not so much its sheer size but, shall I say, the challenge of organising one and a half forms of entry. [inaudible] difficult and more challenging than a one or two forms of entry.

UF Yes, I would agree there, and if your figures are right and [inaudible] if all you've [inaudible] is correct and the [inaudible] population is going down [?], then providing [?] [inaudible] same [?] as Forays [?] it does make sense that in two years time we'd [?] automatically go from 45 to 30 because it would be just a natural progression [?] because the children aren't there and you wouldn't all be fighting over children. [inaudible] at some point we [?] could see [inaudible] public [?] [inaudible] but we are very [inaudible] and I think to close it, as I say, I've got [inaudible]. But we are very [inaudible] at the moment but I [inaudible] one form entry [inaudible] the population is [inaudible].

JW Thank you very much. I'm aware of the fact that this is [inaudible]. I don't know how [inaudible] but just check whether there are any main points and think about the possibility as mentioned a little bit earlier, I think, if we are agreed, that [inaudible].

LM We would [?] be here. If some people who made their points as it were and don't want to make any more points and are feeling [warm/worn?] want to go, and other people who haven't had a chance to make points would like to ask them individually, we'll of course stay here, but that might relieve some people from the heat if they'd like to leave.

JW [inaudible] and will probably just finish maybe a quarter of an hour early but to give you the possibility, the opportunity to [inaudible] haven't had an adequate answer or want to raise individual issues with the panel here. [inaudible]

LM We're always happy to dole out refreshments over there. If you'd like to talk to us, grab yourselves a drink and then come and talk to us.