

# Hoddesdon Westfield Tues 21<sup>st</sup> June 06

## Speaker key

JW	Jane Woolton [?]
MK	Martin Keir [?]
UF	Unidentified female speaker
PW	Paul Wray
UM	Unidentified male speaker
CM	Clive Mitchell

JW Welcome to this public consultation, which is about the review of the primary schools in Hoddesdon and Wormley. I'm Jane Woolton and I'm working for a company called Accent. Accent is an independent market research agency and it's very important that you understand that we are acting totally independently. Hertfordshire County Council have asked us to help run this programme of consultation and we're here to ensure that your voices are heard, that there's a fair and proper way in which the consultations are being delivered. And, in fact, Accent will be making a report to the council on the meetings as we hear them. Also, the meetings are going to be recorded and a transcript will be done of everything that is said here tonight. Both of those will be available on the Hertfordshire County Council website when they've been transcribed and put up there. It might take a couple of weeks. The reason we have microphones is to have all this recorded. You'll find on your chair a copy of the slides of the presentation and also, with that, there is a questionnaire which we would be grateful if you could fill in at the end of the evening and on that sheet, if you haven't found you've been able to make a stand [?], there is a space for you to add any comments that you feel have gone missing. Without more ado I'm going to hand over to Martin Keir who [unclear] and he will actually give a short presentation and after that we will have a question and answer session with the panel. Thank you.

MK Thanks very much. This is the structure of the evening. We've already started all the welcoming and introductions. I'm going to present county council's proposals and then, as Jane as said, we'll have an open session for you to make your points. I'm [unclear] school access to sports and family [?] places and admissions and transport and things around county council. My colleague, Clive Mitchell, is head of primary school effectiveness. That is the curriculum, educational support to primary schools. Paul Wray, my area planning manager and he and Kate Lipton [?] are part of the team that have done detailed work on reviewing school places in this part of the county. My colleagues will be assisting me with answering your questions, inasmuch as we're able to, and providing you with further information. So, what's this review all about? You can see on the slide, the purpose for the review is to make a better match between the forecast for [unclear] school places and the number of school places that are available. At the moment, in this area, and in many parts of Hertfordshire, indeed many parts of England, there are falling bonds [?] and an increase in number of empty places. And there are reasons why having a significant number of empty places is a bad

thing as the second two points set out on this slide - the two main reasons why having too many places empty is not a good idea. First is that schools can be adversely affected by falling numbers in that school. It can have an impact both on the school's financial position, the school's financial viability and, indeed, on its educational credibility as well. Most of the school's budget, somewhere around 80% of the school's budget, comes on the basis of numbers of pupils. The more pupils you have the more money you get. The fewer pupils you have, the less money you get. That's just the natural way of funding the school's worth, according to a formula, which is a double [?] agreed formula. So falling numbers doesn't necessarily mean that you can have smaller classes, which of course would be an advantage, because smaller classes would not be affordable with the smaller budget the school has. What it tends to mean is fewer classes, a smaller number of teachers, less management time and a variety of other things that go with smaller schools which we find to be vulnerable. If you want to talk a bit more about the impact of falling numbers we can do that later in the evening. The second reason – nobody says it's a more important reason, it's equally important – is that having a lot of places empty is not an efficient and effective way of using the money that the county council does have. We were quite alarmed that as much money as possible went on spending directly related to your children's education, that is on teachers and books and materials, and not on keeping buildings going nor the buildings related costs which are quite unproductive. So we wanted to target the money that we do have, in the most effective and efficient way, and keeping a lot of places empty is not an effective and efficient way of doing that. Those are the two principle reasons why we think that having too many places is a bad idea. What numbers am I talking about? The number of places in reception, in the whole of this area, is 509. There are 509 reception places available, and at the moment there are only 416 children in them, which means that 93 of them were empty, which is just over 18%. Our forecast for five years' time is that there'll be about 400 pupils in those 509 places. In other words, there'll be 100 empty, which is more than [unclear] empty. And expressed as forms of entry, at the bottom line of this slide, that is 30 children in a class entry to a school, which is the standard measure of school size, one form entry, two form entry and so on, expressed in terms of forms of entry it goes in roughly three to roughly three and a half forms of entry empty in five years time. That means, if you want to visualise it, three or three and a half classes full, which are in fact not [unclear]. And the next slide just summarises that. Our proposal therefore is that we should be moulding [?] a total of three forms of entry from this area, one and a half forms of entry, if you like, from the north, one and a half forms of entry from the south part of the area. That will lead to a surplus of about 4% of places. Now, the audit commission, as you can see from the bottom line, the audit commission, which is the government spending watchdog for the government and health service, the audit commission's recommendation is that a surplus of about 5% or 10% is the right range. And, as you can say, we're at the bottom end of that. I can say a bit more about that later on. You might ask why have any surplus at all, why not match exactly supply and demand of places. Surely 5-10% represents some waste of expenditure. Well, to some extent it does but there is also a reason for having a degree of surplus. There is a reason and that is to do with parental preferences for school places. If you have an exact match of supply and demand or as close a match as possible then you do quite severely limit parental preference. If you have 5-10% of places empty then there is enough slack in the system to provide for some parental preference while not wasting too much money

on empty places? So you have to keep a balance between not having too many places empty so you're wasting money but not having so few that you're not given really very much choice. And that balance the audit commission recommends is about the 5-10% range. When we've reviewed areas in the past we've developed four tests for reading [?] any proposals or any options such as the one in the consultation document [unclear] should pass. And those four tests are to reduce certain spaces and provide places where they are needed, which is pretty much what I've just been talking about. Also, they should enhance the capacity to raise standards, reduce risk of underperformance and in terms of our proposal we think that is linked to leaving schools with a viable size. The third point is to have acceptable implications for building design, environmentally happy, cost. In other words the proposals that we put forward have to be affordable. The county council has to be able to afford the work necessary to put the proposal in place. And then, finally, a proposal should have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils. All things being equal, we would want to disturb the education of the fewest number of children. That's not to say that there won't be any disturbance at all. Of course there will. It's not possible to have change in any system without having some disturbance. But our job and the job of the schools – management and teachers – is to minimise that disturbance and I think we have a good track record of doing that over recent years. Those are the tests against which any options would have to be considered. What are these options? The first option is the county council's preferred option. And, as you can easily see from your slide or from the booklet, it's actually the most complicated one and affects more schools than the other two options. We have, in a sense, no apology for that because we think we have a sound reason for making that our as our preferred option, which is to close Ryelands School August 08, close this school in August 08, increase Sheredes and St. Catherine's and reduce Forres [?] to one form of entry. That, in summary, is the proposal. And, as you can see if I go on to the next slide, it's considerably more complex than option two which simply closes Ryelands and simply reduces Forres or, indeed, the third option, which would close Ryelands, close West Pavilion and increase St. Catherine's. So, of the three proposals, the county council's preferred one is actually the most complicated. Why should that be? Why would we propose something, which is more complicated rather than less complicated? The reason is about what is left after the review is over. What is important is that we need a system of schooling after review which is at its most viable, which is going to survive in that form as long as possible. And we believe that this proposal, which reduces the number of one and one and a half form entry schools, needs a system of predominantly, though not exclusively, two form entry schools, larger schools, which is more viable. And that's why we want to do something which is slightly more complicated because of the effect that it will leave behind and the length of time that it will last without the need for any further intervention or further change that leads us to that option rather than to option two or option three, both of which however are doable, viable options. They can be done and they will effect the necessary reduction in the number of surplus places but they won't leave, we believe, such a good pattern of schools afterwards. And [unclear] is not to do anything because we're meeting in this school. Our proposal for the south part of this area, which is to close Ley Park [unclear] six forms of entry to two. You could call it an amalgamation but it's not strictly speaking an amalgamation. It is a sort of amalgamation. So what do these options do for pupils? I'll go through option one in more detail and options two and three rather less so because Jane will be looking at her watch if I don't hurry up.

Option one is that Westfield and Ryelands would be made over [?] until August 2008, will reach 200 [?] in a year's time, but would not admit any children to reception in September 2007. Pupils already at those schools would continue to be taught until the end of the summer term 2008. Mobile accommodation will be provided at St. Catherine's from September 07 which will provide space for the extra reception pupils and the school would then manage during the building work that would be required at St. Catherine's to bring it up to the necessary standard and size for the extra pupils that they would then have. If Ryelands and Westfield close in 2008 all the pupils that would continue to attend would be offered a place at St. Catherine's because by that time we would have space there available but, of course, parents would be free to apply for a place in any other school where there is a place available in the year group in Surrey [?]. And from September 2008 Forres would provide further places in reception instead of 45. And that would affect obviously pupils currently attending the school because they'd then reduce the intake, not the size of the year that are already in the school. That's option one. Option two, basically the principle's the same. Ryelands same position as on the previous slide. Ryelands pupils the same position as the previous slide. If Ryelands close in 2008 though places will be offered at Forays or at any other schools that places are available. [Unclear] Forres would reduce from one and a half to one form of entry, from 45 to 30 pupils. Similarly, option three, again, the principle is the same. Westfield and Ryelands [unclear] 2008 but no intake in 2007, existing pupils will remain until 2008, mobile accommodation at St. Catherine's, extra 15 places at reception, building works for St. Catherine's, closing in 2008 and transfer the pupils to St. Catherine's. Basically the same principle as for option one. Those are the options, with option one being the county council's preferred option. What happens next? We've got public meetings until the 29<sup>th</sup> June. The consultation period, however, runs on until the 27<sup>th</sup> July. We'll give you time to send in whatever form of response you want to make, whether it's the form at the back of the consultation document or a letter or an email, however you want to do it, by the 27<sup>th</sup> July and then over the summer we will be collating the results of that consultation exercise and receiving Accent's report and we will report all of that through the education panel on the 12<sup>th</sup> September. They will make a recommendation to county council's decision-making body, the cabinet, which will meet the following month. And both of those meetings are in public. The education panel is probably the better meeting to come to in the sense that that is the meeting at which there will be the most discussion and representatives in schools and pressure groups are usually able to present their case to members of the panel and we would ask that if people wish to do that that they book that with us in advance so the chairman knows [unclear]. Both of those meetings will be at county hall and the times will be on our website. We'll let the school know, of course. If the cabinet for the county council decides on the 16<sup>th</sup> October to go ahead with something, whatever it decides to go ahead with, they will publish statutory notices setting out what the proposals are. Those are out for six weeks and anybody can object or comment on those proposals. If there are any objections to the statutory notice then the matter, as being the standard at the moment, goes to something called the School Organisation Committee, which is an independent committee for Hertfordshire which acts on behalf of the Secretary of State to make decisions in the case of objections. I say at the moment because the Education and Inspections Bill currently going through Parliament abolishes the School Organisation Committee, puts a different process in its place but I'm leaving that there at the moment because we don't know

whether that will be enacted or when it will come into force. So, as things stand at the moment, January 07 will be the likely time for the matter to reach its final conclusion at the meeting of the School Organisation Committee, which again is open to the public.

Just four points to end on and emphasise. No decisions have yet been taken. Members of the county council have not met in any forum in which they can make a decision about this and will not do so until October. We are keen to have your views. We get good responses to consultation exercises and that's all good because all of those responses are made available to members individually [?]. Not only do we write a report but they have an opportunity to look at all the responses, to read the transcripts of the meetings, to receive Accent's report. So the more responses, the more for them to look at, the more they get a feel for what you're thinking about these [unclear]. We want you to send in your views. You've got until the 27<sup>th</sup> July to do that, just after the end of term, and you can do that in any way you want – forms, letter, email, website, whichever way you want.

JW Thank you. We'll now take questions from the floor. Just a couple of points before we start; we're going to run until quarter to nine for the open meeting and then for the last quarter from 8:45 until nine there'll be a period when you can have an individual chat with members of the panel, if there's something very particular you want to raise. We're aware that, obviously, there are very strong feelings about these proposals. Can I ask that you try to contain it and speak only when you have a microphone? There are two reasons for this. First of all [unclear] but the second and, really, I think the most important reason is that it will go on the transcript and we'll be able to hear what's being said. If we get a lot of people talking over one another it's just a mush up. We can't translate it at the end. So we'll have two roaming microphones, one on either side, and if you'll indicate if you want to speak and put your hand up. There are a great many of you here tonight and I will endeavour to orchestrate it so everybody can get their point in. I will go to a new person each time, if I can, rather than going to somebody who keeps wanting to put a different point, so that everybody has their fair chance. At the end of the session, if you haven't had an opportunity, then do please take the opportunity, as Bentley [?] has said of emailing or writing or, in fact, making a note on the Accent questionnaire. I think that's about all I need to say before we start so let's open up to the floor.

UF If no decisions have been made yet why has the new crossing gone up along the Dean and Inc [?] Way when we've managed without that crossing for so many years?

UM It's not the first time that question's been asked. Do you want the real answer? Coincidence. It really is. I have to say it because it's true. Paul and I didn't even know it was happening.

PW In the earlier stages of this review, Kate and I visited all of the schools and it was when we were in St. Catherine's school, in fact, where we were told about the new crossing that was going in. We knew nothing of that until three months ago.

UF You've got a slide saying current and forecast surplus. That's sort of general numbers. Can you tell us what the surplus cases are at Westfield and what percentage of that [unclear]?

PW At the moment at Westfield, certainly from our figures that we have, that we collect at the beginning of each term and obviously those figures can change very slightly during the course of the term but as of April there were 157 pupils at Westfield for the 210 places. That doesn't include the nursery or preschool. Those figures are separate. We always keep them separate when we're working out the figures for all of the schools. So 157 out of 210 places, approximately 25% surplus but we do know that for reception next year we have on our figures 26 places but I know the school would say there are a couple more possibly than that. There could be 28 pupils going into reception in 06/07. Some start in September, some January.

UF And do you have these forecast figures for 2011?

PW We don't actually forecast for individual schools. We forecast for the area because we don't feel we can forecast accurately for individual schools. And that's why the only figures you will see are the figures for the area.

UF Just one more question. What are your forecast figures based on? How do you work them out? How do you calculate them?

MK It's a good question. It's a question that we're often asked because obviously quite a lot hangs on the accuracy of the forecast because if we say there's going to be more surplus in the future and we take out places and we're wrong then it's embarrassing. Our forecast is based on a number of factors. It's based on existing numbers of pupils and existing patterns of attendance within areas. It's based on live birth data that GPs provide us with sorted by area. We get the live births for the geographical areas and we can plan school places [unclear]. And it's also based on housing development data that the district councils give us on an annual basis. So any development it's got to the stage where we know how many units, or they know rather, this is how many units there are going to be. They give us that information and we use that to calculate...

UF When you say units, what do you mean?

MK Sorry, units of housing, flats, whatever it is. And we have formerly been calculating how many pupils are generated by housing developments. All of those things, those are the things that we go by. And that's why we don't forecast five years ahead because we've only got live births for the five years leading up to when they're starting school. Now, obviously, the government does population forecasts and they're much longer than that. You've probably seen them. The Office of National Statistics forecast 15 years ahead and the Department of Education and Skills has recently published its population forecast for primary aged children. And the reason I mention that is that the general trend that that shows is the same as the trend that we have in Hertfordshire, the same as the trend that we have in this area with falling numbers. And it does, of course, show that the numbers go back up again but don't reach a further peak till 2021/22,

which is obviously quite a long way into the future. And we wouldn't waste space and mothball space for 50 years before the numbers pick up again.

UM I'll make my interest quite clear. I couldn't care less about the council's problems but I do care about the education of my daughter. Tonight you reaffirmed that the income depends upon the number of children while the expenditure is more or less static. I also found from your document that at Westfield we have an increasing number of parents who are opting for this school for their children and it makes no sense to me to close a school where pupils ratios are likely to rise and take us to another school where they're already full.

MK That's a good point. I think the point that you made about the increase in popularity of the school and the numbers that we've seen – 26, 28, however many it is – for reception in 2006 is a very important factor and a factor that members will have to take very carefully on board when they're thinking about which option, if any, they wish to pursue. The point right at the end that you were saying, you can't see the point of moving pupils from a school where popularity is going up to...

UM [Unclear] on the basis that it's getting pulled when in fact, on your own document, it's rising.

MK Yes. I think that's a very good point. That is something that members will have to take on board as one of the factors when they decide which option to take. That is the answer.

UM You don't [unclear]?

MK No, I don't. I think it's very important.

UM Will you convey that point to whoever needs to make the decision?

MK Oh yes. I'm absolutely sure that that point will emerge in a number of ways. Firstly, the questions and points made will be recorded from this meeting so that will be heard and, secondly, you and I, no doubt many of us, maybe all of you will put that on your response forms and that will then be reflected as your views and your opinions when we summarise the response to the consultation exercise for members to read. And, indeed, there is at least one member of the county council here this afternoon to hear it. There are plenty of ways in which that point will come through. Yes, I assure you it will.

UF Our children's health society matters to us so how can we consider sending them to St. Catherine's school when we've got risks of a petrol station, fire station, dual carriageway, electricity pylon and a loose dog running round their school grounds? How many parents here are willing to take their children to a school with all of those risks? Hands up, who's willing to send their children to a school like that?

MK [Unclear] all the other points. I know this has come up in previous meetings, both the electricity pylons, the petrol station and there was another one...

[Overtalking]

PW I think if I start with the last one first, being on a main road, being right in the centre of a very busy area, certainly I've been to the school a number of times in the past but when we went this time looking in terms of the review certainly that was something that we had to consider very carefully. It's interesting though that the school itself has a very good travel plan. There are many more children walking to school, even before that crossing got introduced. There are subways and so on. And with that travel plan a lot more children are walking to that school than walk to a number of other schools that you would think had a far easier access. The point that I'm trying to get to is, yes, the issues of schools near to main roads, we have lots of schools like that and, certainly, that is something that we need to consider. The pylon issue is something that, again, we've looked at elsewhere and we have involved a national [overcoughing] to come in and assess and so on. And we will do that again. Admittedly the pylon in this case is... Well, not admittedly. The pylon is right in the far corner of the school playing field. It's not near to the buildings but it is on the school site and it is something that we certainly do have to consider. Petrol stations, cars, yes, we live with those all the time, don't we, wherever we are? We take the point.

UF On the day you published the review, the 5<sup>th</sup> May, Mr. Houghton from St. Catherine's made a report to the Hoddesdon Directory [?], which I have in my hand, his concern over leukaemia link. We contacted Power Arch [?], Children with leukaemia, [unclear] at Bristol University, Dr. Ian Gibson at Norwich who is the Dean of Biological Sciences. Their quote to you on current information available; in my view it's most inappropriate to close Westfield CP School and relocate the children to a port-a-cabin close to an overhead power line. It seems a very unwise decision to take at present. Now, I went in to see Mr. Houghton yesterday. He showed me the plans for the port-a-cabins. You are putting our children at serious, serious danger by moving them. [Applause] in Parliament as of September and you are welcome to have it but you will be putting all our children at risk and I certainly will not be sending my children there and I'd like anyone in this room not to do it. Mr. Wray, we did speak on the phone on Monday. You weren't aware of this report and I've checked [unclear]. It's exactly true. He is very concerned about the risk to leukaemia. We went to Mr. Philips who is the head and the director of Power Watch and he made that quote to us, not anyone else. You told me you knew nothing about this. You said you'd get back to me but you didn't. We had to go well over the edge to get this. Why? I want an answer to my question. I don't want to be told that you're going to think about it or pass it to review. I gave you the opportunity on the 5<sup>th</sup> May to tell me why and nobody's come back to me.

PW I'm sorry if nobody got back to me but my understanding at that meeting was that I said that we would certainly be investigating this and taking it forward as part of the review.

UF Would you like to read it now?

PW I'll read it later thank you.

[Asides]

UF You said that the surplus of 5-10% is giving parental preference but by closing the school and proposing to send us to St. Catherine's we haven't got any preference there. If we don't want to send our children to St. Catherine's what is the alternative then?

MK Yes. As I said about the 5-10% is it gives a degree of parental preference, some parental preference. Now, you asked about the availability of places in the second part of that and I'm going to ask Paul to deal with that.

PW One of the problems with this review is that it's at the bottom end, in other words at the underage groups, that the numbers are dropping significantly. At the upper end of the schools, generally, this is not true in Westfield but this is true across the area, it's at the upper end of the schools that the schools are actually full. And, as a consequence, when we do, if we do, some sort of reorganisation, it is at the upper end that there will be the greatest shortage of opportunity for other options. But we are proposing in this, as option one, we are proposing to expand opportunity at two schools. There's also the possibility and we have not finalised really what we will do at Forres should there be a real need in the short term. So, what I would say to you at this stage, there certainly would be opportunity, if option one were followed through, there would be opportunity for some at St. Catherine's, there would be opportunity for some... [Short break]

UF ...and basically they don't want to take our children there anyway. All the other schools in Hoddesdon, I understand now, are full. So the only place we can go to is St. Catherine's. That was never on my list of schools when I was choosing for my children but now I'm being told my children have got to go there. And if I don't want my children to go there I have no got to go outside the borough.

PW I was just going to add that there are opportunities at possibly Forres, St. Catherine's, Sheredes. Sheredes would have to be under the normal admissions route, yes, and you may believe that that would be difficult but I know, at this moment in time, that there are a significant number of children who go to Sheredes school who live here and further north.

[Overtalking]

UF My son attends Westfield School but I am a resident in the Sheredes Primary School area. I don't know if you've ever been up there at the beginning of school and after school but it is absolutely dangerous. It's chaos. The parking is double sided. They park on the curves, the bends, my drive. Many a time I have to come out and ask people to move because I need to come and collect my son from school. If you increase Sheredes to a two form entry that could mean up to another 80 to 100 cars coming up Bindell [?] Road every day. Where are they going to park? It is impossible. It really is impossible.

MK Yes, this point came up at the meeting at Sheredes School on Monday evening this week and I met some residents who lived immediately outside the front entrance afterwards. I think the point that the head would want to make for Sheredes is that there has been recently an increase in traffic going into the front

entrance because of the [overtalking]. There is a pedestrian entrance/access to the school, a bridge that's been out of action for some time. It's recently been repaired. The head feels that the amount of traffic coming into the school by car will reduce because of the increased amount of pedestrian access. That used to be the case in the past. There's been quite a shift from walking to cars because instead of being able to walk in you have to drive all the way around. You're not going to walk all the way round. And she thinks that there'll be a reversion to walking and using that pedestrian access. But that's not to say that there won't be any increase. I'm giving you the school's point of view.

UF I'd like to say that I've written to several members of parliament. I've also written to, for one, Tony Blair and got a response, albeit not very well spelt but... I also wrote to the Prince of Wales who gave a very interesting response about he's taken on board [unclear] and discussed, as it were, about the environmental issues, which have already been discussed. My main concern, and I believe probably some of the other parents' concerns, about the children are that my daughter has quite severe eczema. Some of the other children in her class, in reception class, have other problems such as learning difficulties, speech problems, etcetera. At the moment the teacher has time to listen, take on board what you said and, again, not from an emotional point of view but purely practical point of view, a child with severe eczema does not get very much sleep as do not the parents and the next day at school suffers as a result of that, especially because of the sedative medicine at night so they can get some sleep. My daughter went to the preschool here and as did a lot of the reception people that are in there with her. So there she is just who she is and the other children are who they are. The child with speech difficulties, the children listen so the teacher listens to him. They understand what he's saying. The people with learning difficulties are taken time to be sat down, listened to and taught exactly the same but have the time spent with them. Now, when they go up she will be going up into year two so SATS [?] will be starting. Again, this is not going to be the only child in acquisition but how will the new school, which already has [unclear] handle the bullying that may or may not go on because of a high number of children in the classes? Stress plays a big part with my daughter's skin so that's going to be a big factor now. And even with the discussions that are going on her skin has come up because she's frightened she's going to lose her place here. I just wonder how the transition is going to be handled for those children?

MK I think we ought to be clear which schools we're talking about. Obviously St. Catherine's is one. You mentioned St. Paul's and the school that doesn't want...

UF Sheredes, because she used to go the nursery school before starting preschool from nine months up to two she went there. [Overtalking]

MK I understand. I'm going to ask Clive to say something about that but we don't have primary schools if they're not sympathetic to children with a range of learning needs or a range of individual needs because that's the basis of our education system is meeting children's needs. I think all our primary schools set out to do that. But I'd like Clive to maybe say something about that anyway.

CM First of all, I'm sorry to hear about your daughter's condition. Certainly in any transition there are a number of pupils who, for various reasons, need

particular and careful attention during that transition phase. We would be very careful to identify as soon as practical, as soon as decisions were taken, who those children were and what their particular needs were. The points you've made here about the support your daughter's getting are good to hear in terms of the quality of the care she's receiving but the quality of care in other schools in Hertfordshire is also good. If you look at our Ofsted reports there are no schools in Hertfordshire that get a report about the care of pupils, which is almost not ever anything less than good. The teachers here, the teachers at whichever school your daughter will transfer to, should that ever happen, would be put as their first priority in terms of making sure that your daughter, any other children that need particular attention in transfer actually get that care. And we would have our specialist teachers actually working with them to make that happen. And we don't do transitions like this without there being some disruption. What we do is our very best but with the teachers and their own staff to actually recognise that and make that as good for them as you possibly can.

UF But surely if the classes are so much larger they're not going to have the time and the resources because the [overtalking] save money and they're not going to pay out more teachers.

CM The size of the classrooms is going to be down to the head teacher, just like it's down to your head teacher here. All schools are funded on the same formula and you shouldn't make an assumption that in any of the proposals class sizes would necessarily go up or down. At key stage one there's a statutory limit to class size anyway which is 30 and in the majority of our schools class size is around 30, either just below or just above. And there are sometimes, particularly in the schools where roles are falling, for a period of time schools can sometimes have classes lower than that but they can't sustain them for very long because they simply can't afford to fund teachers. They're funded in the same way as anybody else.

UF I've got a son in reception and I've also got one in preschool that is supposed to be starting school in September 2007, which is the year you would not let him come here. If you don't make these decisions until January 2007 where do I apply for my son to go to school because he will not be going to St. Catherine's?

MK The standard application process would apply. You would make your application [unclear]. We would have information in our Starting School booklet about the review going on in this area and you would make your application in the normal way. If you later wanted to change that or to apply to a different school then, of course, apply for a place in the year group at any time during the year if you want to.

UF My problem is obviously I'd like him to come to Westfield. If you're going to close Westfield my son, which would then be in year one, and the one that needs to go into reception can't go to the same school because I wouldn't put them in St. Catherine's, the only one you're going to allow. Forres have no spaces in their reception now, neither does Cranbourne, neither do Sheredes. Where would I put my son who's now in reception because my two sons will go to school together?

PW There will be some places available and Sheredes will have places. There will be some places at Forres, quite possibly, maybe not at this moment.

UF But what about in September next year when I put my, if I had to, put my son who's now in preschool into reception? I would then not be able to be at Forres at five to nine and Westfield at five to nine to take both of my children to school and my son who's in reception now would need a place 2007. There wouldn't be one.

PW There are transition arrangements. If you do not want to take up the option which we have put in, which is to say that to try and maintain the peer group thing, the children transferring together, what we have said is that we would make available additional places at St. Catherine's.

UF My needs come in 2007 when my other son goes to school. I can't take one there. Both of them need to go together. Would you send your children to two different schools?

PW I think those are things that you need to be making clear in your response. It is an issue.

JW Can I just say that if you've got an individual issue about children I think it's probably going to be [unclear] because we've got a lot of people [overtalking] that you do write it down on your sheet or email it so we've got a full view of everybody's feelings.

UF If every child matters how you can try and justify a third option which would disrupt the education of 44% of pupils in North Hoddesdon when option two ranges [unclear]?

MK [Unclear] we feel that that option leaves the remaining schools in the area for many years to come and therefore for many generations of pupils to come in the best state and least likely to have further disruptions toward the organisation. What we're trying to do is produce a system that is going to viable and stable for generations of pupils in the future. That might mean, in the short term, that we affect more schools that we would affect otherwise in order to produce that situation. Indeed, I think that the disruption caused by the increases is relatively small compared with the disruption caused by closing the schools and reducing Forres, I would argue, doesn't disrupt the children already in the school at all because they would be totally unaffected by the change. They will remain their current size and work their way through the school. So although more schools are involved I think you can necessarily just multiply up the disruption by the numbers of pupils because I think it's a different type of change for schools and we are investing in future stability.

UF I'm a resident of Westfield Road. We bought my house because of the school, wanted the children to come home from school safely. My question is if the school's closing what is the proposed option for the site.

MK Thank you for that. It's a question that we often have and right so. We have a process within the county council for, wherever possible, recycling our

assets. That is, whenever a service, whether it's a school or an elderly persons' home or whatever, is no longer in use for that purpose, that building is offered around the county council to see if there are service uses to which it could be put. In the event that there isn't any other service for the site then the built area of the school would be sold for development. That would indeed be healthy [?]. As it stands at the moment, it is very difficult to develop the playing field, virtually impossible. They have both national government and town planning protection, such that we don't even try. So what we're talking about is a development on the built area of the site, just where the buildings currently are, which on average produces 35 to 40 built dwellings. That's the scale of it. Now, if I'm intending [unclear] 1,000 [unclear] dwellings to fill a one-form entry school 1,000 dwellings is [unclear]. We have loads and loads and loads and loads of evidence over many years to sustain going back. 35 to 40 houses produces a very, very small number of children per year group. So you're going to get the children produced of all ages. They're spread over many, many years in the education system. The numbers produced in more than one year group by 35 dwellings is very small. That's what would happen to the site.

UF Thank for devaluing my house.

UF Obviously I'm not a parent of a child in the school, however, my child was in school. I was a member of the PTA. In fact, I was presenting [?] as a governor here. So I do speak in more general terms than parents. If you talk about 1,000 new dwellings, you've already got 46 going up on the Hertford Road, the possibility of another 40 here, the fields [unclear] Hertford Road, on the right hand side, are already owned by a builder. The way that the building is developing coming northwards, along the 18 corridor, the fields at the back of this school are obviously pretty high on the list. It may not be on the plans but we all know how plans can change. There will not be a primary school on this side of the main road at the bottom between Roselands and Sheredes. Building at the Boundary Park Estate has already massively increased the traffic on that road. There is no safe crossing point along the dual carriageway. My second point is a completely different one but I'll make it now. Your options here or St. Catherine's, which is a church owned site, [unclear] one side or the other, which again is a church owned site. I suggest that one of the rationales behind this particular third option is that it provides a cache for the sale of assets for the county council because it cannot keep St. Catherine's [unclear].

MK In the housing developments that you've mentioned where the [unclear] system will already have been practiced [?] into our forecast because [unclear]. Obviously where there are possible future developments, which haven't yet even reached that stage, and we don't know where those are [unclear] and another reason for having a percentage of places empty. I can talk about large-scale developments separately but I want to come on to your second point, which is about the money from the sales. It's a good conspiracy theory, isn't it, and we do get that. The difficulty with it is that even when we do a reorganisation which we sell sites at closed schools, because of the limited amount of development potential that they have, the reason that [unclear], similarly, they produce a rather limited amount of money and we generally find in the organisation that we end up spending more on works to existing schools than we get from the sale of the sites. In other words, there's a net spend rather than a net gain and that certainly, I'm

sure, will be the case here. Although it looks like an intriguing theory it's not actually true because we wouldn't make any surplus anyway.

[Overtalking]

UF I may not have made it clear that [unclear] faith schools and I appreciate that St. Catherine's is voluntary controlled [unclear] but this is again lessening choice because these are faith schools.

MK Yes. And to some extent it will be lessening choice as [unclear] non-faith and faith schools. That's a point that has to be made. I fully accept that. Clearly the head teacher at St. Catherine's would stress and, indeed, did stress I think at the meeting last week that we had at St. Catherine's this is quite a broad intake and it's a broad and inclusive [unclear]. Nevertheless, it is owned by the church, as you rightly say, and if you feel that that is given a [unclear] of choice then that's a point that you should make in your response.

PW Can I just add one thing? It's a voluntary control school, both those schools. Wormley and St. Catherine's are voluntary control schools, which means that the admission system is the county's admission system. There's no question that people have got to go to church in order to be eligible for a place at those schools. No school can insist that you go to their service or whatever.

UM During your presentation you said that there were 93 surplus places at the moment. So you're going to share three forms of entry, which will leave a surplus of 4%. Well, in fact, it may be 4% in 2011 if the forecast figures are correct but, as it stands now, it will only leave three spaces, which is actually 0.75%, which is a long way short of the 5-10% that the audit commission recommends. As you said, then it doesn't really offer parental choice, only a degree of choice. 0/75% doesn't offer any choice at all. Assuming that even if the forecast figures are correct when the change goes through in 2008 that will only leave about nine spare places, using your own forecasted figures. We've already heard that there are 45 houses around the corner. That's 1.5, two spaces out of that nine already. Plus if there's building work to be done here, yeah, more houses. So in 2008 you may find yourself actually with a shortfall, having shut two schools, a shortfall of spaces. What will you do then?

MK I'll ask Paul to tell me how many spaces we forecasted in 2008. I don't have that figure in my head but the figure of 93 was now. And the 45 houses are already [overcoughing] and part of that forecast number. I think, if we're looking for a buffer, if we're looking the possibility to more places if need be - and that's all we can say, a possibility, because forecasting is not a an exact science - our proposal to reduce Forres to 1.5 to one form of entry is something that doesn't have to be part of [unclear]. In other words, Forres have the capacity to run 1.5 forms of entry. The head agrees with us that a one form of entry school in that case is easier to manage than the 1.5 form entry school. [Unclear] and that's one of the reasons why we'd like to produce [unclear]. Nevertheless, the accommodation for those 1.5 forms of entry are there. So there is a buffer of half a form of entry in, potentially, the system. And so there is a need for some more places in those years.

[Unclear]

PW We know that initially, when something like this happens, there could be a shortage of places and what we are saying is that we are providing more places in the short term for children to go to St. Catherine's. If you look at the figures, yes, the peak year is 2008/9. The year after that we're down to 396 forecast places. Things are evening out.

[Overtalking]

UM A 0.75% variation isn't enough then, is it, if over a three-year period it can go up and down? How can you have only three free spaces? It doesn't seem viable particularly when the audit commission, they're obviously there for a reason, state 5-10%. 10% on these figures is 40 places which is Westfield School, isn't it, plus ten?

PW But you would have 15 to 20 places surplus.

UM Where?

PW If you did want to, we could keep Forres at the size that it was, and I did say that earlier...

[Overtalking]

PW We've talked about reducing Forres in the options but what I'm saying is that that isn't something that has to happen immediately, particularly if there is a peak year, which in fact 2008/9 is, and we would be watching that very carefully.

MK Option two and the reduction of Forres [unclear] Westfield so I don't think you can make the assumption that the reduction of Forres is predicated on the closure of Westfield.

UF I'm sure aware that the protocol here [unclear] and I have at one stage made a possible relocation of our preschool. Can you guarantee me here tonight that we will be relocated, along with all the other children at Westfield School?

PW We would certainly want to be doing everything we could to make sure that there was no reduction in the provision of preschool places in the area. And that's what we would be aiming to achieve. How we will do that we will talk about if and when an option comes forward that is approved by the member and the county council.

UF Since the review we've had four enquiries and not on my waiting list four children. One has just moved into the area and one lives out of the area. I don't know about the other two. In your forecast, did you take into account migrating people? Although you might have done the forecast with the GPs in this area a lot of people come quite a way to come, one, to Westfield Preschool and they choose that because they want them to come to Westfield School.

MK Yes. Certainly patterns of attendance across areas are [unclear] because we have historical data about that.

UF I'm going back to the percentages that the previous chap was talking about. Right at the beginning you were talking about the forecast on pupil numbers in 2011 and then you said we didn't look at individual schools. It's a forecast for the area. Well, if you're running a business, which, let's face it, it's a business, isn't it. We're talking money. We're talking logistics. You would look at what is going to be the most viable and you would look at the individual viabilities. Therefore, why not look into what a school could be doing in 2011, what their percentages will be, what their percentages and numbers will be, at a specific school. You should be doing this with St. Catherine's, with Forres, with all of them as individuals, not just as an area. And then we can see some figures. We can put numbers, heads, children's bums on seats and I think a lot of parents would feel a lot more comforted if they knew you were looking at us and the other schools as individuals, not just as a whole blanket.

MK I think that's a good point. And in a sense, we do and we don't. Let me explain what I mean by that. We gave you a formal forecast in the sense of the forecast based on live births, inter area flows and housing developments because that sort of information doesn't tell you which individual school is in an area. Other information might though. In other words, historical popularity of schools might change that. And, of course, it's important that when we do a review of an area where there are half a dozen, eight, five, whatever number of schools involved, we don't only do [unclear] forecast. We use other data about the area, much of which is included in quite a large pack that stakeholders were sent, which would include things like the number of first preferences that a school has, the numbers in schools between years. Other factors that we know about the educational strength of the school, a whole range of things. So we do consider the schools individually but that doesn't mean that we try to forecast five years ahead the numbers in individual schools. The numbers [?] are so small that especially in private schools that the statistic is not reliable. They're too subject to small fluctuations.

UF Just picking up on that, why pinpoint a specific school's closure then or two specific schools for closure? Surely that is an insignificant number at an individual school?

MK No, but what I'm saying is that we don't only use the forecast in coming forward with proposals of this kind. We use a range of other factors as well as the forecast. I think Paul can say something about that sort of information.

PW The only thing I was going to add was we can't predict the numbers at any one school year on year. For example, I know that the ladies here, their children are in reception where there are 20 children but next year at Westfield, according to the applications that have been accepted, there will be 27 or 28.

UF After January it will be full.

PW Yes. So year after year it's extremely difficult to predict individual schools and that's why we say that we look at it across the whole area in forecasting terms. We don't try to forecast individual schools but we do look at the numbers that are in individual schools and the preferences that have been made for those

schools. And that's something that we will want to consider. And that's why we've got three options in here. And you know we said it's a preferred option, which makes for a greater number of two form entry schools. And nobody has actually mentioned that here tonight. That's fine but that is the reason it's the preferred option. But there are the other options that you, no doubt, will prefer and we want to hear that from you.

UF Presumably, the information that you're gaining from this evening will go towards the consultation, it will go to the review and they will have their eyes opened as to exactly how the school is progressing and how it is growing?

PW Yes.

JW Can I assure you that what's going on here is being recorded and also written up so everything that's said will be reported on?

UF As well as a lot of faithful [?] parents, I came to this school when I was younger. 15 years ago I would have been on your side, saying close this school it's terrible, but since I moved back into this area I was like [unclear] and it was my kids are coming here. No other school will do. As this lady next to me said about the little boy in reception with a speech problem, that's my son. My eight-year-old brother also has a speech problem. He was left [?] at school three years ago by another eight-year-old child because of his speech problem. What chance does my son stand because of his speech or her daughter because she's different? According to our records, we have at least 12 traveller children in our school who also get classed as different. Eight of those are from Essex. Not once have I heard of an incidence of bullying, swearing, name-calling or children being penalised because they are different.

PW The only thing I can say is, yes, the traveller pupils, we know about them and we do take that on board.

UF But you say choice. They travel a long way to come to our school because they feel comfortable that their lives are not going to be made hell because they're different.

PW I think the point that Clive made earlier about the acceptance of other schools as well of all pupils... But that's something that needs to be worked at. If there is a reputation, yes, and if option one were taken forward then that would have to be recreated elsewhere and not without working at. And we would be working with the traveller coordinator and [unclear] about these things.

UF What about the people with the special needs children? I have got these four ladies sitting in front of me to thank for the help that my son got in getting his speech problem to the stage it is now and it's two reception teachers. He was in preschool for almost two and a half years and even now sometimes they can't understand him. How is he going to cope going to a new school just like that?

CM I just want to echo what I said earlier about the very real care that we would take over such pupils in transition and the amount of time we put in to actually ensuring the very best transition for them. Our schools in Hertfordshire are all full of very good teachers and you've got them here too but if that decision's made to

close Westfield, it's only one of the options going forward, if that decision's made, once that's made the teachers involved and the staff that are supporting them will want the very best for those children and will be looking to make sure that that transition goes as well as possible.

UM I'd just like to ask why the county council is determined to get parents to move their children into a two form entry school when we have made the choice to have our children in a one form entry school. You're making the decision to where my children go for me. I don't have a decision anymore. And the most frustrating thing about the whole theory is that I spend a lot of my hard earned money giving it to you to pay for your wages but it doesn't seem as though you're listening to what I'm saying.

MK I happen to support what you said to the extent that we'll talk about it. I think we all say something about our preference, our educational preference between all of these schools but I think it's true to say that schools don't stay the same size even when the school doesn't change. By that I mean schools get larger and get smaller without there being a reorganisation such as this. It's comparably [?] possible for a child going through a primary school or secondary school to find that that school has enlarged or has reduced [unclear] which can happen any year and doesn't have to be part of a reorganisation. So I think it's important to say that...

UM I still have a choice though, don't I, because if they're reorganising the school I can take my child out but what you're telling me now is I haven't got that choice anymore.

MK Well, no, I'm not because you can take your child out now to another school if you want to. But that choice is always available and that is always your right. I think we should come back to the 2FE point that you raised and ask Clive to say something about why we prefer...

UM I know why you prefer it, because it's economically more viable for the county council. I understand what you're saying there. What I'm saying, as a parent who pays the money to go towards running the school through my taxes, I would like my children to go to a one-form entry school and not a two-form entry school but you're taking that decision away from us.

MK I hear what you say. In the school system as a whole we don't always have the number of places for the type of school that parents want. Size is one thing but it's equally true of single sex secondary school provision where we have more people wanting places than others. There are specialist schools with a whole range of ways in which the availability of places is limited. It's not open-ended and it's not necessarily available to everybody who wants it. That's just a fact. Now, there are always going to be one-form entry schools. I couldn't conceive of a situation in which we didn't have any one-form entry schools at all. We have one-form entry schools fairly widely distributed around the country. It's actually not the case that we are able to close every one form entry school simply because it's a one form entry school. In many circumstances a one-form entry school at the full [?] end and a viable number is a viable school. Equally, we can't allow one-form entry schools to spiral downwards. It would reduce educational opportunities.

UM So which one form entry schools do I have a choice in this area if you shut Westfield then?

MK One form entry schools we will have will be Forres...

[Overtalking]

MK In this immediate area that is it, I'm afraid and [overtalking]. Having asked the question about why [unclear] schools I know that you're asking on economic terms but there are other reasons as well but maybe you don't want to hear those.

UF It was very strong, what the gentleman just said about two form entry schools. In the government white paper it says that parental choice in individual learning is their main priority. There's also [overcoughing] in November 2005 said that he can't find anywhere about two form entry schools being more beneficial? So with the parental choice we chose Westfield, firstly, because it is a one in two form school, secondly, because it's a non-religious school and, thirdly, because of the position it's in. So if my child can't come to a school like that which is not in the borough at all – because we have looked – how do we go about home learning? Because that's our only other choice.

MK There are a number of groups that support home learning that you could get in touch with. There are a number of organisations who support home learning and I'm sure we can provide you with the names and email addresses or websites of some organisations.

UF ...[short break] therefore we can afford, basically, a private tutor to come in or whatever but that's our only other choice. We live on the Boundary Park Estate and we can't travel to Sheredes. We can't travel further. Westfield is as far as we go and it's our preferred choice. What we're going to do is keep our child at home.

[General agreement]

MK I think it's difficult in an open forum to discuss individual circumstances but we will be here for as long as necessary and I'm happy to talk to you individually about that.

UF [Unclear] the individual questions.

MK Well, the question you've just made would have been...

UF No, the one I'll come and ask you afterwards.

MK Right. Is it different from the one you've just...

UF Obviously you've just said come and talk to you afterwards about individual cases.

MK About a particular set of circumstances. You've described those and I think we've captured them on the tape. So unless there's any other aspect of...

UF [Overtalking] address it out now so everybody here can hear it.

JW One of the points addressed is actually in the review book.

[Overtalking]

MK I can't give it now because I don't have it in my head. I'll have to take your details afterwards and supply you with that information.

UF Would it be possible to supply to the head of this school? Surely that decision is only if you're going to [unclear], close the school. You've already decided you're going to close the school.

MK No! You're putting words into my mouth. I haven't said that at all. I'm quite happy to offer you information now irrespective of the outcome of this consultation. Giving information is not connected with [unclear]. I can give you information about a series of things now, if you want, which would have no bearing on the decision which is made as a result of this process.

UF One of my children is in year four so if you do shut this school he'll see this school out but then teachers will start leaving because they're not going to stay. If they get a job offer somewhere else they're going to go. What's going to happen to his education? Are you going to be able to supply teachers, especially in year six when it's his important year?

MK Yes, that's an important point. Obviously we do have quite a bit of experience of these sets of circumstances because [unclear]. I wonder, Clive, if you could say something about the support that we would give to a school once a decision has been made that it would close. The decision would be taken in January and he would not transfer, say, until summer, effectively, in 2008. [Overtalking] you want assurance and I can give that assurance. We will support that school to provide quality of education for your child during that period of time. I think it's important to say that.

CM There's nothing much we can add to that when we're dealing with a situation such a long way away which is hypothetical. If that decision is taken and then if we had a situation whereby children in year five and six were finishing their education here, the first thing we'd want to do is work with Dianne and her staff to see just exactly what the situation was in terms of teaching, who was going to teach and where they could see their future careers, what reassurance and support we could give to them in order to achieve as much consistency as we can. There's nothing more we can add to that at the moment because it's such a long way down the line that it's completely unclear as to what the real position is other than the fact that everybody involved would be wanting to achieve what you want to achieve and that is the best possible position for those children.

UF Are the staff going to be relocated if the school shuts?

CM Clearly some of them will be but we would need staff here to teach the pupils too.

UF If they're not sure they're going to be relocated they're going to leave.

CM That's the point I'm making about once we've got a decision and we know exactly what the picture is and we actually have the talks with teachers involved about the situation for them and what they'll be going onto.

UF I asked whether they'd find jobs for the preschool staff because we don't work for the council.

JW I think we're now straying into land that we can't go into.

[Overtalking]

CM I think the point that I made there in answer to the preschool leader's question was that we would certainly want to be providing the places that we currently have at a very successful preschool and we don't know exactly... It's a bit like the other question. Whatever happens we will be working to that end.

UF So whatever happens we will keep our jobs? [Unclear] [Overtalking and laughter]

CM You heard what I said, didn't you?

MK No, we're not guaranteeing. It's not in our power to guarantee jobs [unclear] if the preschool is the same [?] provider. So I certainly can't give you a guarantee about something over which I have no control.

[Overtalking]

MK There could be other reasons for the preschool to cease being [overtalking].

JW Can we move on? It is getting quite close to time so I'm going to take questions from people who haven't spoken before only because we've only got about another five minutes of the open discussion. If you have a point and you haven't got it across please email it, write it on that bit of paper, make sure that in some way we get a record of what you're thinking and feeling.

UF I'd like to know, are you planning to come in the school and spend time with the children and see what they think of all this?

MK The short answer is no. The short answer is that unlike secondary schools where we do consult school councils about their views, I don't think it's probably appropriate for us as non-school staff to come into the school to talk to pupils at primary age. I think that schools can do that themselves but I do think we have to be very careful that children are not used in any way as ammunition, if you like, between us [overtalking]. I think you made those points very well. I think you made those points properly. Whether it's proper though to use children to make those points, especially young children, is not entirely clear. We're quite happy for the schools that work with the children all the time, and this quite often happens, to gather children's views and they can be in written form, picture form, whatever and

let us have that. That, as I say, often happens. But I don't think it's appropriate for us, as people who don't normally interact with them, to go in and do it as a wild exercise.

UF [Unclear]

MK Oh yes. Absolutely. That's different. I think that's right. In terms of knowing what the school is like and certainly Clive will be starting the school effectiveness [unclear]. That's not quite the same as working with the children. I take the second point entirely.

UF What I'm worried about is the children going into port-a-cabins as well. They're coming out of a beautiful school [unclear].

MK I understand your point. I think I have to [overcoughing] cabins are very much a temporary measure. They're only there whilst we're undertaking building work either at St. Catherine's or at Sheredes, as the case may be. So it is short term.

[Overtalking]

MK I think it's important to say that there's something about port-a-cabins. I think we should walk away from the idea that they're some dreadful hole in which nobody wants to be and I think the quality would be... Paul can say something about it.

PW The building regulations that apply to port-a-cabins now are totally different from those of 15 years ago. These would be brand new buildings. These are [unclear] meet all kinds of regulations in terms of acoustics, in terms of ventilation and all those things that we would want from any environment where any of our children would be taught. And that's what we would want. And even if they're there as a temporary measure, they would be as a temporary measure, but it would be a good environment. This is not something that is a substandard environment.

UF [Unclear] taught by the same teachers or are they?

PW We don't know because that would be something that would be organised through whoever was the head at the particular school that was receiving pupils.

UF Westfield is a good school, a lovely school, a second home to them really and then they're going to a foreign school, trying to [overtalking] and...

PW I understand those concerns.

UF It's very important.

PW That is why we felt that it was important for us, and I know some of you don't want this...

UM None of us...

UF None of us [overtalking].

UF The whole school doesn't want this and how much sway would that [overtalking]?

UF I've got two questions. One of them is if you go for the third choice it's St. Catherine's, [unclear]. I'm a parent who is in the estate [?]. Cranbourne School is within a stone's throw from my hand, two-form entry. Forres is to my left, a 1.5. I travel here to see my child [unclear]. There are many reasons why I wouldn't send my child to St. Catherine's – the pylons, the religion. Whatever you say, it's still a faith school. As you can tell, there's a lot of bad feeling about St. Catherine's. Can you explain to me what will happen if you go for the third choice and we don't send our children to St. Catherine's? What will happen then if the majority [unclear]?

MK As a result St. Catherine's will stay much of its current size.

UF What happens to all the children at Westfield? You've still got to provide education for children.

MK At the end of the day it's the parents' responsibility [overtalking].

UF You're not offering us a similar school. You are offering us a faith school. That is not a similar school. That is a big difference. Surely we should not be forced to put our children into any faith school. Whether you say [unclear] or not it's still a faith school owned by the church and we have the right, as parents, to refuse. [Applause] [Unclear] is not a faith school that has enough place to take all our children in. Another question. [Unclear] when you've been to Westfield and visit [?] the children.

PW We've been into all of the schools.

UF No, I'm asking about Westfield.

PW Including in Westfield and we've been in and we've looked at...

UF Can you tell me when? Have you actually been in during the day to visit the children?

PW We came purposely for this review. We've been in the school three times but only once looking [unclear] with the children, yes. But I'd been in the school before that as well. The point of us coming in, we're not the professionals in terms of looking at how children are working. What we're interested in is the [overtalking] and the reason why we've got option two in there is because we keep seeing what is happening in Westfield school. We've seen improvements [overtalking]. We've seen changes in management. We've seen the improvements. We've seen the parental preference that some people are aching for this school, although I would add that those people are coming from... [Overtalking] what I'm trying to say is that some of the people who make a preference for the school come from some distance away, like yourself. That's what's happening but what we were trying to do with our preferred option was to

create a good spread of schools to serve the whole of this community. Now, we've put in option two as well and that's the one we would expect many of you, if not all of you, to be voting for.

[Overtalking]

PW All we can say is this is an opportunity, this is a consultation and you make whatever comment you wish to make, which will go forward... I don't know. It is a county council decision. It is a members... We are officers. We do not make the decision. We present the information that we've gathered during this whole process and that will include the information that you give to us.

[Overtalking]

MK This is the directors' consultation on options for this geographical part of the county.

UF And he knew or she knew that [unclear] [overtalking]?

MK Yes.

PW The reason Westfield is in that preferred option for closure is nothing to do with what is going on at Westfield at this moment. It is to do with the preferred option of the county council to have two form entry schools wherever possible, particularly where there are falling rows in an area and to have a reasonable spread of schools of that size. That's why but we have put in option two, as is there, for you because we have seen what is happening at Westfield.

JW Thank you. Obviously there are still a lot of questions and a lot of things that you would want to put. We are running out of time. The strength of feeling has been very much noted. It has been recorded. But if you feel that you have more points... We can't take any more questions now.

[Overtalking]

JW We have a set time because within that time we're going to record a meeting in every school. I would urge you, please, to write down any of your feelings and thoughts and they will be [overtalking]. There will now be time, if you wish, to talk [overtalking]. This is a consultation. Nobody is making any decisions at this moment here and that's why... [Overtalking] That's why we are here. That's why I am here in order that all of this information goes back and you will see the report. If you then have further issues that you feel we haven't put and represented you properly then please do make your point. I think at this point we will have to close but please do speak to the panel. Thank you very much for your tremendous help [overtalking].