

# Hoddesdon Review, Wormley School 27-60-06

## Speaker key

TG	Theresa McGarry
LM	Lindsay Martin
UM	Unidentified male speaker
PW	Paul Wray
HK	Harriet Knowles [?]
UF	Unidentified female speaker
CM	Clive Mitchell
SU	Sue [surname not known]

TG My name is Theresa McGarry. I work for a company called Accent and we've been employed by Hertfordshire County Council. [Unclear] we're completely independent. My job here tonight is to ensure that the panel has an opportunity to put across the proposals and, more importantly, that you have an opportunity to put across your queries, comments and questions. There are a number of ways in which you can make your queries known. You can have an email [unclear] or on your chairs you'll notice that there is a questionnaire written by Accent. If you want you can either complete that questionnaire tonight or you can mail it back to me in the next week or so. My address is written at the bottom of that. You can do one of those two things. If you want a more considered and more measured approach to it then [unclear]. What we do is we take note of each of those things and from that they will actually fit into a report that will be available at the county website [?]. Tonight we will be recording the meeting as well. The benefit of that is that there will be transcripts available and you'll actually be able to download those off the website in a couple of weeks time too. If you stand up and have something to say you can either do it in an anonymous way or you can actually say who you are – a governor, a head teacher, a parent, whoever you are and give your name. You can be anonymous or you can say who you are. What we're doing this evening is I hand over to the panel and they do a presentation. The presentation will take about 24 [?] minutes and then I'll open up to the floor and ask you to [unclear]. The most important thing is that if you have a question you let the panel answer the question otherwise there's no point in posing the question. If you want to retort or come back that's fine. The most important thing of these meetings is that they are very impassioned and very informal [?]. If you have a question ask your question but let the panel answer the question and that way I think everyone will be happy. I'm going to pass over to [unclear] presentation and he will also introduce you to the panel members as well.

LM This is the format for the evening, pretty much as Theresa's already said. I'll introduce my colleagues, county councils proposals and then, we'll open up to an open session and Derek will tell us [unclear] and we'll hang around and talk to people individually afterwards if you want to. We'll be here. My name is Lindsay Martin. I'm head of school access. I'm responsible for most things relating to

accessing schools across the county – the admission system, transport, state of the buildings, property and so on. My colleague, Clive, is the head of primary school effectiveness. That is our most senior advisory person for the primary schools. Paul Wray is my area planning manager for the district teacher review and Kate McGuire is planning officer. These two have done detailed work around here and can answer detailed questions.

So, the purpose of the review, what it's all about? Essentially this is to reduce the number of surplus places in the area. That's the purpose. Underneath we give two reasons related to that purpose like why is that a bad thing. You might say surely that just means we can have smaller classes and that's better, isn't it. If we could have smaller classes as a result, yes, that would be a good move, however, there are a couple of reasons why it doesn't work that way, primarily the way we, the county council and, therefore, the schools are funded. The government funds us and we're funding schools primarily on the basis of the number of pupils there are. If there are fewer pupils in the school the school gets less money. I'll start with the bottom one, which is about revision and effective use of decisions [?]. That means that when we have a limited amount of money to spend in schools we want that money to work for the pupils. We want that money to go on things that are directly beneficial so that we can go to teachers, books, materials. We don't want to spend it on maintaining buildings that are partly empty nor the buildings related costs that there are because that's just a waste of money. It's not an efficient and effective use of the money which is available. The second point is that if schools are funded primarily on their pupil numbers and their numbers go down so does their budget. That gets to a point where the schools face viability issues, issues of survival, having enough money to run the school. Also, smaller numbers of pupils will need a smaller staff, less management time, all sorts of things that a reduced size of school [unclear] and Clive can say more about it if you want to ask questions about that. Those are the two reasons why having a large number of vacant places is a bad thing and something that as a county council we can't ignore. We have to do something about it. That's why the review and this is one of a number of reviews across the county, not just this area. It's wherever there are a significant number of empty places and that's true of quite a lot of geographical parts of the county, as it is of England as a whole, because of falling roles [?], falling birth rate, smaller numbers of now primary age, in the future secondary age pupils. We can talk more about that and the effect of that on housing and all those sorts of things later if need be. But just looking at the actual numbers we've jumped from 509 places available in reception year in primary schools across Hoddesdon and Wormley. And as at April this year 416 pupils in them, which meant that 93 of them were empty, which is 18% of the places that were empty. We're forecasting in five years time that there will be 400 pupils in those 509 places, which is 109 that are empty, which is 21.5% empty. And expressed as a form of entry, a form of entry is a group of 30 children, which we've used to define the size of the school. So a one form entry school in so many years in it means 215 pupils. A two form entry school, two classes of 30 in each year will be 430 pupils. It's a way of measuring the size of the school, if you like. The next slide is a summary of the previous one. Effectively, at the moment, we've got just over three forms of entry of surplus places. That is the minimum. That's three [unclear] and going up to three and a half classes [unclear] visualise the kind of space that that represents in each year group. That gives you a feel of how many empty spaces there are. We think, therefore, we should remove three forms of

entry from this and leave a surplus of about 4% only compared to the 18 to 20 odd percent that we saw in the previous slide. The Audit Commission, which is the government's watchdog on spending in local government and the health service, recommends a surplus of around 5-10%. I'm going to say a bit more about why they recommend that range later in the evening, if you'd like to. When we've done these reviews in the past – this is by no means the first one we've done – we've devised a set of tests that the organisation should meet, not necessarily [unclear] with them completely but get as close to them as they can. The first one is about reducing empty places and providing places where they are needed, the actual original purpose of this review. The second one is the capacity to raise standards, reduce the risk of underperformance. That means having robust schools, schools that are not significantly empty, that are full of pupils, have enough money, have enough staff and so forth. The third one is about having exceptional implications with building design, environmental impact and cost. And that's quite important because we have to propose options that we can actually afford. There's no point in us saying just build a whole set of new schools when we don't have enough money to do that. So we have to have a school that we can actually afford and we are likely to get planning permission for if we do building works four years on. They have to be viable options. Lastly, they have to have acceptable transition arrangements for affected pupils. All these being equal, we would want to disrupt – because there will be some disruption – the smallest number of pupils and there is a plan on how that would work. We can say a bit more about that later on in the evening. Those are the four tests that we've developed over the last few years. What are the actual proposals for this southern part of the area under review? Fairly simple single proposal which is to close Ley Park which is in capacity a two form entry primary school although running at about half that size on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008, expand this school from 1.6 to two forms of entry, in other words, to take 60 pupils per year from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 and 1.6 is a slightly odd number to have anyway but, there you are, that's what it is. We'll expand that to a standard two form entry school. Just for completeness [?], there are three alternative proposals for your part of the area but I guess you want to concentrate on talking about this area, which is why I haven't put them out in any detail, which would reduce your part of the area by 1.5 forms of entry. The proposal here would be to use this idea about 1.5 forms of entry, which is the total of three forms of entry as I mentioned a couple of slides ago. How does this option work? It means that Ley Park Primary School would be open till the end of August but it wouldn't admit new pupils, reception pupils, in September of next year. This September would be it's last intake if this was agreed. Pupils already at Ley Park though would continue [unclear] in summer 2008 with no new entrants. We'll be providing mobile accommodation here to provide a temporary space for the extra places at reception and the building works that we will do here are a contingency to provide standard accommodation for the complete number of pupils. Then if and when Ley Park School is closed at the end of August 2008 all those remaining pupils, i.e. the pupils excluding the first year would be offered a place here but parents would have the option of applying to any other school, which has an open place in the appropriate year group. You wouldn't have to come here but an offer of a place here would be made. The reason for that, basically, is we believe that pupils should be given an opportunity of staying together in their existing year groups and moving on the block. That's where we are now. What's the rest of the process after this evening? These public meetings with you [unclear] shortly, 29<sup>th</sup> June, but the consultation period, the period [overcoughing] goes on until the 27<sup>th</sup> July,

just after the end of term and we need to actually give you time to fill in the form at the back of the consultation document or send us a letter or email, go on to our website or whatever you'd like to do. From the 27<sup>th</sup> July we will be analysing all of those responses and writing a report to the education panel of the county council for its meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> September. And that meeting would also receive a separate report from Accent. The education panel will debate the issues and make a recommendation to the county council cabinet which is the decision making body of the county council which will meet on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. They will make a decision about what, if anything, to do. If they decide to do something they will publish the legal notices or statutory notices to that effect and they will run for six weeks. They are open to comment or objection from any member of public and if there are any objections to those statutory notices then that will be decided by the school organisation committee which acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for education and skills in making decisions. Probably, and I say probably because there's a current bill going through parliament that abolishes the school organisation committee but we don't know when that will be effective from so for the time being I've left the process as it now is. It's just important to say that both the education panel and the cabinet are public meetings. You're welcome to attend either or both of those. The education panel is the one where there will be the most debate and where representatives of schools and/or pressure groups are usually allowed by a chairman to state a case. That, in a sense, is the more useful, if you like, if I can put it that way, meeting to attend. It would be helpful if you could tell us if you wanted to come. It would be helpful for us to learn that so that we can make sure we have enough space available because the committee room in the council chamber in the county hall has a limited amount of space and we want to make as much space available as possible. So that's the process. The very last slide, you'll be pleased to hear that I'm done, is a repeat. I just want to stress that no decisions have been made yet. That usually is met with a certain amount of cynicism. It is actually true. County Council officers who make the decisions haven't met in the sort of forum they have to meet in to make a decision of this kind. The cabinet is the only body that can make a decision of this sort and that has not considered this matter yet at all and it will do only in October. They haven't made any decision yet. We are keen to hear your views. That's why we're having these public meetings and circulating the consultation documents and so forth. You've got until the 27<sup>th</sup> July to do that.

TM The forum for this evening is we're going to open the meeting to the floor until about 20:45. Because not everyone will get an opportunity to speak, what I would encourage you to do is [unclear] because not everyone wants to speak in a public forum. The panel members will stay afterward to answer individual queries so I will urge you if you haven't the chance to speak specially please do come up and speak to a panel member individually. As I said already, we are going to record the meeting and there will be a transcript available. Because of that, could I urge you to wait until the microphone comes to you to speak? You can either be anonymous or you can say who you are.

UM I obviously don't have a child at school but I do live in a house next door to one of the schools [?]. The points I'd like to make are the actual start of the personal [?] school reduction and that is [unclear]. There's nothing specific about this park [or part?] but what I think is that your own figures, the council's figures, show that the forecast for the number of places in the little group is isolated for

Wormley and this school and Longlands so that the forecast number of places is rising throughout the period up to 2012. There are two other tiny points I would make. The first thing is that there is a gradually rising number forecast of places up to 34 so that at this point, this year, the forecast being four months [?] [Unclear] but in 2012/13 it's gone up to +34 places, which is an increase of 7.62% of the amount that you're actually forecasting for this school and Longlands. Now, for the other part, [unclear] learning schools are there's a decrease of 155 places, which means that there's a drop of 5% at all the other schools. That doesn't quite tie up with what you're saying, unless you've already allowed for the number of children who will be coming from Ley Park to Wormley in those years.

LM Let me start off and I'll ask my colleagues to deal with the detail.

UM Could I just briefly say the other two points? One is this. There's no indication you've taken [unclear]. A lot of the houses around here are occupied by people who are really getting on and of the number of houses in this very road itself I would say at least half the people in this road come into that category. In [unclear] years, if I die or move into [overtalking and laughter]. The other thing is [unclear] and specifically here there's a huge piece of land, which is only partly owned by the [unclear] council, which is just over the bend, just on the other side of the school. I've measured it on the map. It's half a mile long, fifth of a mile wide and it's bounded by the sea. [Unclear] no use. Its only purpose could be for housing. Now, you've got to take into account factors like this. Are the current [unclear] going to save a huge piece of land that adds up as becoming 10,000 square yards, [unclear] houses on there. [Unclear] in the next 20 years. It's the largest piece of available land in the borough between the [unclear] and the Mable Island [?] Road. Everything outside that is landfall [?] and trade. That must mean it's the last piece of land that's available for housing. Those are the three main points.

LM I'll start off with the big points and then ask my colleagues to talk about the more detailed figures. On the birth rate, [unclear] figures in our own forecast showing a decline in the number of children in the primary age group. We'll work through the secondary in due course. The Office of National Statistics have done the forecasting and the [unclear] has recently released a chart of the primary age population for the whole of England over the next 15 years, which is further than we've forecasted for reasons that I didn't explain. But they are forecasting populations of pupils and not the pupils in particular areas. It's the total population. It goes like that and then up again. We're at a peak here, about 2004, the numbers go down then come up again like that. And so they come back to here, about 2021/22. They'll go down and then come back up but over a 15 year period. That's a national figure. I do believe that is offset in some geographical areas by the amount of houses built there. If you go to Berkley [?] at the time it might have lots of extra houses in the area and that's where I'd reduce the level of [overcoughing] or indeed level it off completely or, in some areas, even increase the number of places if the amount of houses is that large. And [unclear] got that mixed picture, falling numbers in some areas, steady in other areas and a slight increase in a few areas, mainly as a result of house building. Now, as far as our own pupil forecasts are concerned for the next five years, and we only forecast five years ahead, because our forecast is measured on the [unclear], the information on live births that we gain from GPs by arrangement. So, depending

on how many live births there are, obviously, you've only got five years of birth available before they get into school so we're having to forecast five years ahead. That will be important for where we are because we're not forecasting populations and new trends. We are forecasting pupils using known numbers. That's the difference between what we do and what the government does on a national level. And that forecast agreement takes account of, in each year, all known current housing developments. Whatever district council is able to provide us with information about the youths that that development will have on it. So our forecast patterns in each year the developments that are coming forth. Now, of course that won't [unclear] longer term developments, which haven't yet reached the planning stage. That's an important point and I may come back to that. [Unclear] turnover of properties in aging populations is something that we encounter quite regularly in most areas. We do it in parallel to this bottom bar. And the same is true of the bottom bar. There are aging areas, if you like, of the town and those houses will change hands. They might be changing hands to people with children. There is a certain degree of that and we do have to take that into our forecasts as well. It's less accurate because you can't know exactly how quickly and in what way that turnover will take place. I'd like to come back then to the forecast numbers for this area. We're reviewing Hoddesdon and Wormley as a whole. We're dividing it for the purpose of the consultation and options into north and south but we are reviewing the area as a whole. In the area, as a whole, there is a decline in the number of pupils. Obviously you separate out some of them leaving schools and you're going to get a different picture. And that's where I'll ask my colleagues if they'll deal with the detail of the wards [?] leaving schools.

PW I think the point that you made about the decline in this area, which is an area where parents do separate [?] schools and an increase... Sorry, an increase of 78% in these two and a decrease of 5% across [unclear] schools further north, I think if you're actually balancing that out it means a decline overall. And what we tend to do, as Quincy said, is we look at the whole area because when you get down to looking at two individual schools and find a forecast for an area that small it's practically impossible to do that. But if we do look at the numbers that are forecast, the three schools in this area, if you include Longlands with Ley Park and Wormley, even at the peak of our forecast over the next six or seven years we still have 60 surplus places in each year group in forecast and that's why we're here tonight really because with 60 surplus places across three schools and particularly as we know the situation at Ley Park at the moment where [unclear] applicants for cases [?] that will impact the other over the next number of years.

[Unclear]

PW The east of England are suggesting that there should be 5,600 houses in the area of Broxbourne [?] built between 2001 and 2021. Some of those are already built but recently, just looking at the last week, they've increased the allocation for Broxbourne from 5,100 to the 5,600 – another 500 houses – within that planned period up to 2021. Obviously a number of those are already built. Canada [?] Fields in this area and further north, those are already built on significant numbers of units of housing or flats or whatever. The thing for us is that where you've got a number of flats or two bed apartments or whatever, there tend to be fewer children coming from those years. That's not always the case but generally speaking that's sells [?]. Certainly what we are forecasting in this area is

included in... The Canada Fields and so on are all included within our forecast but we do have to be mindful that 5,500 houses to be built in the borough of Broxbourne where will they go. Some of them may well go on greenbelt land and the land that you're talking about, I think, is in the greenbelt. Some people talk to us about all of the land to the west of Broxbourne up to the 8M [?]. Where? What? We don't know. We have no input into that but obviously there were significant housing developments within those areas then we would need to be looking at what provision we would make for children living in any new development and that's where we would be negotiating with developers for funding to do that.

LM I think it's just worth saying that we're talking about housing on the scale of another 4,000 to 5,000 houses. We're not talking about just filling up these few school places here that we're now thinking of taking out of the system. That wouldn't be the way we'd do it. If you've got an item [?] of 4,000 or 5,000 houses which would support four or five forms of entry, in other words there will be two new schools, we will be seeking to work with the developers and the available contributions that they have to make to basic services, to put a new school to service that particular area. So you've got a large area plan, half a mile long and wide or whatever, that can contain sufficient houses. The master plan here, if you like, is don't buy [?] a new school. [Unclear] and that would self contain. That doesn't mean it will have an impact on the numbers of places available in schools [unclear].

[Overtalking]

LM They would be developing and [unclear] the land and the facilities that are required to service that quantity of houses. The [unclear] are currently negotiating a 3,600 house development west of [unclear] and that's going to have a new secondary school and two new primary schools on the side. On the side of the houses land has been made available for that school and the planning is going a section 106 contribution will pay for it. That's what happens with large developments and they don't tend to have any platform obviously because they're self investing [?].

UM [Overtalking] the county council produce some more detailed information? It's very difficult in that your original consultation [unclear].

LM There's not a lot in there and you don't want to put masses of things on the screen and make things unnecessarily complicated but if you would like more information, if you'd like forecast numbers for the areas and you want to see the assumptions that go behind those forecasts we can provide that. If you come and see us at the end of the meeting we can arrange to send you that.

HK I'm Harriet Knowles. I actually live in [unclear] Drive and [unclear] for many, many years and I've been on committees at this school. I've been chairman of the Wormley Nursery School in the past and many other things. Two very quick questions before I go on a little bit further. Can somebody tell me how many surplus places are in the schools at present and also how many surplus places in Ley Park at present? And then I'd like to go on to say I've lived here for 40 years next to this school and Ley Park. [Unclear] we have a lot of trouble with parties

and most of us have had, at great expense to ourselves, to build drives where we'd like a front garden just so we can get to our own houses at times. I would like to know why Wormley School is the one being considered to be kept when a smaller area and it's a smaller intake and Ley Park the one to go when they already have two form entry which is what you want and I believe they have loved being near the school and seeing all the children and doing things in [unclear]. I would like to know why a school which is not large enough and has difficult entry and parking is being put up as the one to keep when the school which is large enough and has very good entry and passing [?] is going to go.

LM I think it's important to stress that Ley Park is a two form entry school notionally. It's actually about one form or less than one form entry in terms of actual numbers. There are more pupils in this school than in that school. One of the reasons we've chosen Wormley for this option is that there are more children here, nearly double the number of children here that there are there and, therefore, what we are proposing is less disruptive in that sense and recognises parental choice and popularity of schools. I think that's a start, as it were. I think you're absolutely right to raise the point though about congestion and traffic. It isn't [unclear]. It's a rotten job being a planner really because all the things never conspire together to help you. You've got a more popular school but it's got less good access. Ley Park is a less popular school but it has better access. You never seem to get all the good things in the right place at the same time. That's just a fact of life. What we would do is to look very carefully at the entrance. We do own the land immediately outside the gates, the green areas, [unclear]. We would look at the arrangements for access into the school, clearly. That is not to deny, however, that access is an issue. It may be such an issue that we will be unable to get planning permission to do the work necessary on the site. That is why, if you look at the bottom of page four, there's a paragraph that starts important note. It says as part of this proposal the county council will retain the Ley Park site as part of Wormley COD Primary School until any building work was complete. In other words, the existing pupils at Ley Park, as I mentioned, would continue their [unclear] here while building work is being done at the [unclear]. However, the second sentence is if town planning concerns make expansion on the Wormley site impossible Wormley COD Primary School would transfer to the Ley Park site as a two form school. So, in a sense, this is our preferred option because we feel it would be disruptive for fewer pupils and reflects parental preference but if we were physically unable to achieve it on this site because of town planning issues then we would have to consider the Ley Park site instead. We're looking at the size of schools. This is a larger school, even though its capacity is smaller. It is a large school in terms of actual numbers of pupils and is more popular with parents. We've responded, essentially, to those facts.

PW In theory there are 336 places here and there are 26 of them surplus. So the school is almost full. At Ley Park, in theory, there are 420 places and over 231 of them surplus, at this moment. 189 children are at Ley Park or were at the beginning of this term - 189 for the 420 places that are there.

[Overtalking]

PW At the moment that's about 0.7 or 0.8. It's under one form.

HK I don't know if I quite believe the answer.

[Break in recording]

UF We've actually got four vacancies [unclear].

LM [Overtalking] the numbers across the school as a whole. 26 spaces across. If you're taking the gaps...

[Overtalking]

UF Across the school as a whole we've got four.

[Overtalking]

UM We also have appointed or issued another three places [unclear] so we are a two form entry school. We're running as a one form entry school. We do have reception and nursery as well. The point that I want to make is that we are running as a one form entry school. This is a 1.6 form entry school and if you join the two together it makes 2.6 forms of entry. [Unclear] but that may still make more than two forms of entry.

[Overtalking]

LM We've just established that.

UM Depending on what it is you say, I think it's in the more than two forms of entry on [unclear] wherever it is. Our site is a two form entry site and we've possibly got potential to expand more than that. If planning goes ahead on this site, we'll be using a field across the way, across the public access bridge. As a head teacher I'm not quite happy about supervising children to go across a public access bridge. [Unclear] That will be using the specific site as it is right now but to [unclear] a transitional period of a few years. I'm just wondering how that fits in.

LM I'll ask Paul, in a moment, to give the actual numbers there would be in each year group in a combined school. I think it's important that we know how many children there will be at the combined school of entry from year of implementation. Not as it is now because the numbers are going to change between now and 2008 when all the children would come across. We need to determine that and make sure [unclear] knows what they are. I think the second point about the public bridge... And this came up at the public meeting at your school yesterday evening and I thought it would come up tonight as well so I took the opportunity to have another look at the bridge and the walk and so on. To be honest, I think it's possible to overplay this a bit. If you can envisage leaving this site at this end of the car park, so you're almost next to the [unclear] and the palisade about 13 inches this side of the bridge is also installed on the far side and the surface is made a standard walkable surface and the field which is currently overgrown and a fire hazard and a [unclear] hazard is maintained and properly managed as a playing field, I think actually what we've got is a considerable improvement in the local area and something which I think is... I won't be the head teacher so it won't be my responsibility so it's easy for me to say this, it looks

to me a perfectly viable and safe option if those things are done. I know that probably quite a lot of you won't agree with that, particularly parents at your school. They're very, very much entitled to their view but I do think that with necessary works that need to be done it would be an improvement. I thoroughly take your point. Taking pupils, however frequently the school decides to do that, and what it wants to use the field for then [unclear] how it wishes to manage that is up to the school. We can come back to that issue, if you like, later on. What I'll do now is to go to Paul and ask him to give the figures [unclear].

PW Obviously this is quoting the figures that we have for this term. That's the children in the school at the moment. Those figures can change from year to year and within year but if you take those children who are at both schools who are currently in year four, because they are the ones that would be in year six when all of this would happen, there would be between the two schools 80 children in year six. In other words, 20 more children than a normal two form entry school. There are 20 in year six. There are less than seven in year five, an extra nine in year four.

UM Are these the whole numbers or just the increase?

PW [Overtalking] 80 in year six, 67 in year five, 69 in year four, 72 in year three and after that then it's below the 60, from there on. For those four years... [Overtalking] 56 next year and 50 the year after that. If you add the over figures in those years between those four years we're talking of 48 children more than a two form entry school initially and the reason why... We're saying that [unclear] they could if they want to or you as parents or parents of Ley Park children could look at other schools where there is fair capacity and some of them may well do that but this is assuming every parent of the Ley Park children wanted to choose this school if their school were to close. That's what these figures are saying. And if we were to accommodate all of the children we [unclear] in order to do that.

UM How many children are now at Wormley at the moment? [Unclear]

PW If you include all of the children, including nursery children as well as the children in the school, which I think you would want us to include, there are currently 342 children at Wormley and there are 200 children at Ley Park. If you add the two together you would be talking 542, including all of the nursery children.

UM At this site?

PW Correct.

UM And that would be in the year?

PW that's at the moment but if the class numbers are changing and declining. In two years time it won't be as many as that. It would be 468 plus the nursery and we don't know what the nursery figures will be in three years time but within the school, assuming that all those numbers are [overtalking].

UM I think that raises a problem with cars and I'd like to ask if you have considered the implications of that.

PW Yes, we have been looking at how we could, if this proposal were taken forward, increase the car parking on the school site and how we could make improvements on the highways. Now, we've been involved in highway [unclear] as well and consultants will look at that issue. We don't know what the outcome of that is yet but there could be significant cost in improvements on the highway.

[Unclear]

PW We would be looking at whether that's feasible and if it's not then obviously planning would be dependant on getting highway approval and if that is not forthcoming or there is a very significant cost then we may have to look at the other option.

UM But the information will be made available?

LM At the time of the planning application. We have to make the planning applications, as it were, to find out what the highways authority would expect in their response to our planning application. We can get some form of that by employing consultants and so on but the actual test of it is when you do the actual planning application and at that point we would have to decide whether the cost of whatever it is going to require [unclear] variables whether we would have to reconsider. In a sense, it hangs on that town planning application process. The town planning process, as you know, involves its own consultation process. If you're a local resident, particularly, you will definitely be involved.

[Overtalking]

UF [Unclear] Just think how much that land is worth and I think there's your answer.

[Overtalking]

UF I asked the question last night and I'm still waiting for my answer. The other thing is I came here at 11 o'clock this morning. There was no way I [unclear] [overtalking and applause]. I can't understand why the teachers are allowed to park as they do because you couldn't have even got [unclear] into the school and that was at 11 o'clock and not at the times of nine and three. It really is disgusting here and I wouldn't like to think that my child or my grandchild was coming here with all the [unclear] that there is and I would like some of the residents to take that up [unclear].

UF Well done.

[Applause]

LM I'd say that's grossly exaggerated, the dangerous [overtalking and shouting]. I am entitled to a view as well actually. I think comparing the park now to what it was like then doesn't make any use out of it. Any changes we would

make to the site to accommodate the increased number of children here, we would do two major things. We would expand the amount of car parking on the site and we would seek to do alterations to the entry and exits to the school [unclear]. The detail would depend upon the Highway Authority's response to [unclear]. I think it's unfair to say I came to the school [unclear]. It wouldn't be the same. That's [mobile phone interference] [unclear]. So we'll try again and we'll try again tomorrow evening and see if we can get the vote [?] across. In terms of the cost, again, this is a factor that comes up quite often, that we're only doing this for the money, that we only want to sell the sites to build houses on them, we can make millions of pounds etcetera, etcetera. It's common and quite understandably. You might well think that, as it were. The fact is that over the last three years that we've been doing these reviews in the areas, the cost of doing the work necessary to the schools which are going to receive more pupils exceeds the money that we get from the selling of the sites of the school to close. And that didn't used to be the case, many, many moons ago, but there's a reason why it's the case now and that is that only the existing built on parts of sites can be developed. Let's say this part of the site is developed. The only area we can develop is the built on park site. As some of you, I'm sure, know we've said it at other meetings that the playing fields are these days protected by both central government legislation and the town planning process. It is virtually impossible to build on the playing fields, to the extent that we don't even bother to apply for planning permission to build on them because it's a waste of time. That means that you only get the value, if you like, and you only get the extra housing – 35 to 40 units, on average – on a built part of the site. That's why, usually, we spend more on the receiving schools than we [unclear] sale of the closing ones. So, in that sense, it isn't a money making exercise. And, therefore, the limited values of the Wormley site and the Ley Park site are not really that pertinent. With your inner city [unclear] you're going to have to spend money anyway.

UF What are you doing about the 342 children at this school at the moment? I have told you, you could not get a fire engine here or an ambulance. So for the next two years these 342 children could be at risk. I thought about this today. If there is a fire and a teacher is in the classroom and she can't leave the children she can't get to her car to remove it so a fire engine could get in and I think this is quite a serious point. At Ley Park they could get in. The headmaster has made sure that nobody parks unless they're in the actual [overtalking].

TM Okay, you've made your point. I think the head teacher actually wants to respond on this point.

UM [Unclear] teachers and parents at this school are.

UF There were four cars parked in the middle of the car park today. They were people coming in either for music or coming in to work with individual children. But we are, as is quite true, always full but it is not untrue that if we need two fires we can't do it. We've got a huge support staff that far outnumbers the number of teachers we've got and very often people leave their cars [unclear]. So if we ever need to move or go out at lunchtime to go to the bank or anything we just say could you please move your car, which they do. What we're trying to do is to avoid parking outside on the street because obviously that just adds to congestion and we feel that once the parents have cleared the street outside by 09:15 or 09:30 then we're trying not to add to the problems that you have. But it's quite

untrue to say that 342 children, at present, are in any danger in our school. It's totally, totally untrue.

[Applause] [Overtalking and shouting]

UM You said a total of 468 pupils including nursery school. That's over seven years. That makes an average of 66 per year. That is more than a two entry school. That's without infectability [?] from any new housing, any people moving in to come to this school. That means any parents moving to any house around this area have got no chance of getting [unclear] to this school. That's six pupils more per year. That's the first point. The second point is it was said quite early at the start that no decision's been made. Why is a lot of money being spent on surveying the area? We've all seen the [unclear]. I'm just wondering what has been done.

LM When we do a review we need to add [unclear] the sites of all the schools that are in your area. That sort of work will have been done at every school, not just at one or two, to gather information for the purpose of the review. Plus [unclear] will in any way make decisions about anything to do with the school.

[Unclear] [Overtalking]

LM The utilities have nothing to do with us, with the county council. Any works done [overtalking].

PW At the moment we are having to do some work at risk in the sense that we are working towards a planning application. If we have a planning application we need to know what are the services coming into this site because we need to know whether we need to upgrade any of those services or not. That's the work that is being done currently on this site. We haven't commissioned that work on the Ley Park site because what we are proposing is if this proposal gets agreed that we would submit a planning application for the expansion on this site. If that is impossible to achieve then, obviously, we will be looking at the Ley Park site. That's where we are at the moment. Going back to the figures of the 66 per year group, yes, those 40 [?] [unclear] are in the previous four top year groups. So anybody else moving into the area would not find it possible to get a place at the school but there are places at other schools in the locality. As part of the proposal for the northern bit of the area, we are talking about an expansion at Sheredes School of another 15 places per year group. So there will be places there. They may not impact directly on people around here but there will be enough [unclear]. That would release more places in this area but not at this school, yes, you're absolutely right. In those four year groups – six, five, four and three – in the first year we'll have an amalgamation. There will be more children than would normally be in a two entry school.

UM And Longlands?

PW We're not proposing to alter Longlands and there are some [overtalking]. As far as I know, at that stage we would have three places in year six, one in year five, four in year three, six in year two, 12 in year one and 11 at reception.

UF You were saying this isn't about nursery schools but we have three local nursery schools and between three of them they have between 2.5 years and three years old which will be coming up for the five years at 2008. We have 90 children in this area, just living in this area.

LM Yes, and we know about that. We don't necessarily [unclear] figures for school and so we use seven year groups times the number of [unclear] in the school at the calculation of the size of the school. [Unclear] but we do have some information about that as well because we happen to have an annual audit. I think, Paul, would you like to do the numbers.

PW Just in the sense that the trends in recent years that some of the children in the southernmost part of this area that we're looking at do tend to move further north for their schooling. In other words, they try and get into Broxbourne or into Sheredes and there is a general trend or drift, if you like, further north, even though there might be that number of children in an area. But we find it very difficult to look at just those that are in nursery or in preschool because some of them don't end up in our schools anyway. There is a trend going northwards.

UF [Unclear] that's going to be more than two entry.

PW Yes, but, again, we have Longlands School in the area as well and, in fact, [unclear] out of this area we've got Mayfield [?] and St. Claire's with some spare capacity as well. Those schools are nearer to Canada Fields, for example, where we do expect some more young children to be coming from that area.

UF Does your forecast include the newly built houses?

LM Yes. I'll go over the forecast again for learning. One of the sources of information we've used to make our forecast is information we've received from district councils about the numbers of units in planning applications. So if a site is going to be built on in a year or two's time and we know how many units are going to be there, we will calculate the numbers of children and those numbers we've included in our forecast. The only gap is the potential development of a site, which nobody has come forward with at that stage.

[Overtalking]

UM How long does it take for planning permission for the development of a school? Say you close down Ley Park and build houses on it, is there not a five or ten year [unclear]?

[Overtalking]

LM That's a good point. It takes some time to build the substantive school because often the developer will want to make sure that they've sold [unclear]. It's a big development, £1,000. You're talking about ten, 15 year old houses. They usually often sell quite a few houses before building the [unclear] but they've got to make temporary school provision from day one of the first house. It depends on the developer and what's agreed as part of the agreement. But it could either be

temporary facilities followed by permanent ones or permanent ones from the outset.

UF But is there any feel for how long will that actually take?

[Overtalking]

LM [Unclear] that may be, it may not. We simply don't know. How long it will take from somebody, let's say, expressing an interest in [unclear] on a site like that to getting to actually building the houses might take several years. It depends on how complicated and how contentious the town planning circumstances are. The development west of [unclear] enquiry and an inspector and a report to government and a decision has taken years and years just to get to the planning commission let alone building the houses. Something that's less contentious will take much less time. The district council was here at the meeting last night. I'm just wondering whether anybody has got better intelligence [?] on how long these sorts of things take. Certainly from [unclear] it's multiple years but how many years.

UM Someone says, okay, move the schools out and lands up sitting here doing nothing. Everyone's going to know [unclear] doing nothing.

[Overtalking]

LM Talking about development of the school site, we'll go through a process that will start actually before the school is empty. Let's say [unclear] hasn't been decided but say for the sake of argument the county council decides to sell perhaps Ley Park School. Let's say it takes that decision around the end of this year. It happens in October. Statutory notices [unclear]. Once it's made that decision, bear in mind that [unclear] until 2008 which is a year and nine months after that. The county council would start by circulating the details of that property internally to all the council services to see if any other government services can make use of the buildings. That is our care services, whichever. That process doesn't take place until the beginning of March [?]. If that is unsuccessful, if there are no other takers for the building then [unclear] services, which is the corporate property part of the county council would ask our [unclear] to prepare a prospectus for the same site. The chances are it will be [unclear] and it would be, as I said, the built part of the site. Now, that process of marketing [?] the sale would take some time. It depends how popular the site is. There's no reason why that process shouldn't have gone quite a long way through before the autumn of 2008 or the summer when [unclear]. Those things can happen in parallel. I'm just trying to think of recent sites that we've been involved with and how long [unclear]. [Overtalking] if it's going to happen to redevelop a site that's proved to be very popular there are security issues, [unclear].

[Unclear]

LM What you're, effectively, are saying is that we should keep Ley Park a one form entry school and keep this as a 1.6 form entry school.

[General agreement]

LM Okay. That's obviously a possibility and [unclear] [overtalking]. I'd like Clive to say something about why we find it important to maintain a one form entry school.

CM The issue over school size, size of school doesn't determine what group [?] it is. We have a lot of different sized schools in Hertfordshire – small, medium and large – and a lot of very good schools of different sizes. Because they have good school [unclear] to do with how good the teaching is, how good the leadership is. If those factors are in core we don't have any doubt that two form entry at a size has a lot of advantages to the governance and the [unclear] of the school in terms of the overall size of the school budget and, therefore, the flexibility in terms of what they can spend on the children's education rather than maintaining a school which is half empty and so on. Two form entry schools can and do have larger budgets. They have a greater flexibility of spending and they can, therefore, develop more resources in the education of children now because the key issue is that that money the school is receiving needs to be spent on the children now and on their education rather than other factors. The issue about when we're doing a review what size school we prefer, and the third option is that, if we can, we would like to leave the path of the two form entry schools because of those reasons. That's sustainability in the future and the best pattern for the area in the future. But we can't always do that. It's not just a question of size. It's a question of location as well and in other areas if we can leave one form entry schools which we know are going to be well subscribed then we do that too. What we don't want to leave in an area is a one form entry school where the numbers are going to fall further because we know that at a certain point where numbers in a one form entry school fall the school has to be organised. They have to lose a teacher. They may have to reorganise again. They may have to lose another teacher. It only takes one additional factor, like the head teacher gets another job, and the school can suddenly become very vulnerable and the standard of education can fall. The other issue is that we're also cautious about leaving 1.5 form entry schools or 1.6 entry schools if we can do something about it. This size school is actually one of the most expensive options to run, as Sue will know, because when you've got [unclear] 48 you haven't got a sensible class structure and you tend to have to employ more teachers than you would do if you were either a one form entry or two form entry equivalent. Those are the kinds of factors we're looking at in a review in terms of what's the best pattern of provision for these children in this area in the next ten to 15 years, for the children yet to start school and yet to be born. Those are the considerations behind it. Your suggestion of leave the school as it is...

UM I'm not saying that. You could make that school a slightly smaller school and sell half that land for property development. Therefore there'll be houses and [unclear] then you've got the increase to take the kids that are brought into the area anyway from the houses being built up. Then you don't have to close down the school so fast because you're going to build homes anyway so you're going to increase... [Overtalking]

LM I think what we have to [unclear]. If the nominal [?] size is larger people can still [unclear] less than one form of entry. That makes it a size which is vulnerable. So apart from making it smaller our problem is that it's too small at the moment.

[Unclear] [Overtalking]

LM It's actually very difficult to do. If you utilise a school like this and think you've got to leave the playing fields around it, if you want to reduce the size of these buildings and somehow put some housing mixed in with the school in the middle of the playing fields, if you think about the design of it that would be awfully difficult to achieve.

UM It is quite a different school than when I was at school [?] [Overtalking].

LM I think I would have to say [unclear] for those sorts of reasons. I think [unclear] housing schools and being a single site is probably not viable.

TM I think you've made a point. I'd really like to move on.

UF I just wanted to point this isn't a [unclear] school and [unclear] reducing that school and using it as a buffer school to allow for growth in that area whereas down here we extend Wormley to a two form entry school. It will be over subscribed. You say you've got other local schools to go into but I've called Longlands and they're full at the moment. I don't really think [unclear] in two years time because you're not going to know who's moving in and who's moving out. And our other local school is Broxbourne CV on the river, which has some criteria, religious criteria to get into. You have to go to church for a year. You have to go to the board of governors to be allowed in the school, which alienates most of us. If Wormley's full as a two form entry and no Ley Park where are the children going to go? And if the children are going to leave Ley Park and pick another school in the area [unclear]. There is no other choice. You take away total [unclear] and then the working parents you're taking their choice because you're extending their school. [Unclear] [Applause]

LM We're increasing it by a quarter in size, from 48 we'll take it to 60.

[Overtalking]

LM I'll ask Paul to explain the building work necessary to accommodate two forms of entry as opposed to 1.6 but the point is that the increase of the size of the school is not that large and I think if Wormley parents don't want that then obviously they have [overtalking]. I think Wormley parents feel that we're changing their school [unclear] let's just understand that. On the Forres model, which perhaps isn't right, we have to close as our third option [unclear] but Forres School will be reduced from 1.5 to one form of entry. The substantial [?] build to Forres as a one form entry school, it's gone up to 1.5 through use of temporary accommodation. So what we're simply doing is we're simply taking Forres back to the size of its main buildings. However, having said that, and this is where I come back to the 4%, this is towards the bottom end of the range of surplus. We do have a possibility of Forres remaining 1.5 forms of entry but since [unclear]. That's important. I want to come to your main point, which is about choice. You're absolutely right. When you reduce the number of surplus places you do restrict parental choice. You're absolutely right. It would be quite wrong of us to pretend otherwise. It's actually a preference rather than a choice. You used the correct terminology. We will be restricting parental preference for such place. We wouldn't be taking it away completely but we would be restricting it. It is inevitable.

If you match the number of places, exactly the number available, then you offer virtually no choice at all. The admission agreement would simply kick in and allocate children to the nearest school. If you've got an exact match between the number of places and the number of children it's the most cost effective way of providing [unclear] but it allows no preferences at all. And that's why the Audit Commission doesn't say that the surplus should be nought. What this 5% to 10% recognises is that authorities should have some capacity for parental choice. If you have too many surplus places then you're running a very expensive and non cost effective system. If you have too few empty places then you don't give parents any preferences at all. The aim is to provide sufficient empty places for some choice while not wasting too much money that should be going on the children. That's the balance that we're trying to get.

UF I understand that. If you actually move Wormley out to Ley Park and it's a two form entry either they would have a buffer [?] [unclear] because you could extend Ley Park to take more children as the growth fluctuates up and down in the council whereas here once you get to [unclear].

LM That's a very good point.

UF [Unclear] big area, people moving in and building houses. We need a school that will take the growth and Wormley's not going to be able to take the growth and it will be over subscribed and then surely...[break] [unclear].

LM Yes, I think you're absolutely right. What you're doing, in a sense, is putting the argument for using the Ley Park site rather than the Wormley one. I think I said at the beginning that you never get all of the factors pointing just one way or one direction. It's always a bit of a mixture. If all of us pointed the same way it would be a no-brainer about what to do. It would be obvious but it's never quite that simple.

UF No, but I think you have to go to the most factors [overtalking].

LM I think the factors for this site, if you like, are popularity and numbers of people already here and, therefore, the numbers potentially affected by a move. The factors for the Ley Park site are that it has more space, more expandable and has better access. You've got a set of factors for that site and you've got a set of factors for this site. To be honest, it's a matter of judgement and each and every one of you come to your own view about how you think those factors weigh the balances, as it were, between the two sites. I think that's been very helpful in bringing that out.

UF I'm [unclear] grandmother. I haven't heard much about the children. I've heard car parking, profit [?] for the council and I feel that something should be said for the children and the disruption to their education. Whichever site we go on we're going to have three or four years of large classes [unclear] [overtalking]. What have you arranged for them? Will it be more than the normal class size?

PW If there are going to be more children that doesn't mean to say we'll have class sizes of more than 30. The government says that we shouldn't have class sizes of more than 30 for the younger children. We would want to make that

through schools that we don't have class sizes of more than 30 and that's what we will be working with then with the head teacher of whatever school is here to make sure that that was the case. The temporary accommodation that we would bring on site or wherever to accommodate the additional children two years down the line, that temporary accommodation meets all the regulations that we should meet in terms of accommodation and building regulations [unclear] including disability access and all those things. We believe that in providing the accommodation that will allow the school to carry on during a period of, yes, some disruption. You are doing building works on a school site. That does cause disruption. And if we were looking at this particular school we would be looking at the addition of something like three classrooms and a multipurpose space as well. Obviously we'd be reconfiguring car parks and hard play areas and so on. Significant work and, yes, there will be a cost in that in terms of the disruption. And whether it will be here or Ley Park, if we were doing something there, there would be significant disruption there too if we were doing works there. And, yes, we accept that. In every reorganisation, we never have the exact number of children to fit into what is [unclear] at the time. It's really usually because, certainly in these sorts of situations, it's because of the decline in the pupil numbers but what if the numbers are declining in the top end of the schools, generally speaking, they're fuller. And that's where the problems come. We feel it's worth it to create schools that are viable schools that will provide the correct finding so that the funds, as Clive was saying, can go to the children and to their education.

UF We chose this school as well because it's Church of England and we want that to continue. No mention's being said [unclear].

PW What I would say to people who've also made other comments about this being a Church of England school, this is not a school like Broxbourne school. Broxbourne is a voluntary [unclear] school where you've got to have the church connection and they have admissions rules. This school operates like every other community school within Hertfordshire. The same rules apply for admission to this school as for any other community school. So there's no question that people would be excluded on church grounds or anything like that.

UF The actual curriculum, is it different because it's Church of England school to Ley Park?

PW There's a great difference in national curriculums [unclear]. I don't know if Sue wants to say anything.

[Overtalking]

SU Obviously the church is a very important part of the school and I think that's why lots of people choose it but in terms of curriculum they've got the same national curriculum as everyone else. We follow the religious education curriculum laid down by the county but then we add onto that. We have church governors. We have close ties with both the local Church of England church and with the Greek [?] church. Actually, there's nothing in the proposal to [overcoughing] Church of England school and I understand [overcoughing] objections about it. [Unclear]

[Overtalking and laughter]

UF One of the questions we've asked [unclear] really is a big issue but the other thing was how long our children might be affected by the accommodation building. Any idea of how long they're going to be in mobile accommodation for?

PW We would suggest that, on the figures that I quoted earlier, that a double mobile would need to be on the site for probably three years, possibly even four. That does not mean that your children would be in that mobile classroom for probably anything more than one year of their schooling because I'm sure, it's not for me to say but I am sure that the school would organise the situation so the year groups moved on into different accommodation throughout their schooling, as they probably do in the rest of the building. And it wouldn't necessarily be the children from Ley Park or children from Wormley. The school would be integrating the pupils whoever they were, wherever they came from originally. We would want to leave that little bit of surplus as well. It may not be that both of those classrooms would be used by class teaching for the four years but we would want to leave that up to the [unclear]. The bulk of the bigger numbers have gone through [?].

UF So it's still going to mean disruption for all our children now at this school and if Ley Park come over every single year will be disrupted for four years.

[Overtalking]

[Unclear]

PW The quality of these classrooms [overtalking].

UF My school actually [overtalking] when I was at school and had major disruptions for the last two years of my school so I know what it's about. We're disrupting children [overtalking]. Whichever way you look at it, the children are the ones that matter.

PW We can't say there isn't going to be some disruption. We can't say that but what we are saying is that we would actually provide appropriate accommodation for the whole period when there would be some disruption on site.

TM I'm going to close the meeting. If anyone else feels that they want an opportunity to actually say something can I encourage you to come up?  
[Overtalking]