

BANES Cabinet Meeting

12th September 2012

Good evening Councillors

Thank you for your time to hear me.

I represent the Governing Body of Combe Down Primary School, I'm also a local resident who lives half way between Combe Down and Foxhill and I'm passionate about community cohesiveness.

You will no doubt have seen from the consultation feedback on the draft concept statements that the issue about primary years' education provision resulting from the new development is an issue of great importance to the community.

The proposal put forward by the 280+ who signed our petition and numerous individuals who completed the consultation documents showed an overwhelming public support for a new 3 form entry junior school on the new development and conversion of CDPS into a 3 form entry infant school.

The benefits of this option over the draft concept statement's proposal for a new single form entry primary school on the new site are significant:

Firstly, it would solve the current infrastructure problems that exist at CDPS. It is BANES' most densely populated primary school. There is no grass playing space, much of the site is an old quarry edge and unusable for play. It has 100 year old buildings that are not only falling down but are poor teaching environments, plus it has 40 year old temporary buildings that are life expired. The Government's push for all junior school children to play competitive sport is certainly hard to achieve.

Our proposal for a new junior section of the school on the new site would provide much needed greenfield space for the older children to enjoy. Opportunities for sharing a playing field with Combe Down Rugby Club could ensure that the additional land take costs are offset.

Under this option, the extra space that would be released at the existing site would mean that the buildings that need to be demolished could be, without having to rebuild them, saving the local authority significant amounts of money in the near future. The extra space would provide infants with a much more reasonable playground space and also facilitate much needed pre- and after-school provision.

The second major benefit of our proposal is that it would protect the cohesiveness of communities in Foxhill and Combe Down. A new primary school would have the serious potential to divide the community – as the natural tendency would be for people to want to send their children to a brand new school complete with modern buildings and a fabulous playing field while others would be left with a far older school with twice the population and half the physical space. Which would you choose?

We do not believe that the third option, combining both schools onto a single new site, is the right solution either. It would have a significant adverse affect on Combe Down village shops as the current school provides such an important flow of people and therefore revenue. In addition, building new houses on the existing site would not be economically wise as several of the buildings at Combe Down Primary are relatively new.

Although I understand that the option for a single split site school is still within the Concept Statements for the developer to consider, I believe that primary education provision is a **strategic** decision that the Local Authority needs to make.

I can't believe that any profit driven developer is best placed to decide what infrastructure should be provided to benefit the wider community. His aim surely will be to maximise profitable development on the site he has bought? The time to make this decision is now, before the concept statements are finalised and before the land is bought from the MOD, so that the land prices can reflect the infrastructure needs of the whole community and not just the new development.

With a move to reduce management costs for schools, the proposal for a new stand-alone single form entry primary school with a second headteacher, senior management team and governing body not much more than half a kilometre from an existing one, is at odds with efficient primary education provision.

I therefore put it to you, and hopefully have demonstrated that the popular opinion from residents is also the solution that will hold the community together. A single school, on two sites and under one strong management team, is the best primary years' education arrangement for Combe Down and Foxhill.

Thank you for listening.