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By email

05 October 2017

Dear Sir/ Madam,

**Formal response to the Statutory Proposal to close Alderman Swindell
Community Primary School**

I write detailing the NAHT response to the above consultation:

Procedural Concern

Having now seen a copy of the initial, informal consultation paper, it appears that Norfolk County Council has not followed the requirements of the relevant statutory guidance: In that, the specific closure proposal is not contained in this consultation and further the document states "...we are currently considering alternative uses of the Alderman Swindell Primary School site..." Such a consultation to consider a "range of options" would not be regarded as a statutory consultation as set out in legislation.

(Please note I now use the numbering from the Statutory Proposal for convenience).

4. Reason for closure

The primary reasons quoted for the proposed closure are to make "better use of existing buildings and to consider replacing them where this is more cost-effective." These reasons do not address the absolute primacy of educational outcomes for children.

It is correct that Alderman Swindell Primary School was judged as Requiring Improvement (RI) by Ofsted in Dec 2013 and February 2015.

However NAHT understands that recent key data shows significant improvements have been made and sustained over the past 3 years.

During the previous inspections the school achieved a 'Good' grading for personal development, behaviour and welfare. This is fundamental to how the school is run and the school leadership firmly believe this has to be in place before other improvements can be embedded. NAHT believes this is also highly valued by the parents who have chosen to send their children to Alderman Swindell.

NAHT further understands North Denes Community Primary School is a coasting school, identified as a school causing concern, a DfE category. There is no reference to this in the proposal.

Although it is widely accepted that a good (school, home and community) environment benefits children's learning, the proposal is to expand an existing site. The proposal contains no detail on this expansion, nor on its timescale, but proposes to close Alderman Swindell Primary School before any proposal is agreed and significantly before any "new" building is available. The statutory proposal therefore arguably does not properly address the overall quality of current or future provision (as a relevant factor for decision makers).

5. Pupil numbers and admissions

NAHT understands that there will not be sufficient places at North Denes for all Alderman Swindell pupils, (based on NCC's data). The proposal states only that that everyone will have a place at a local school on 01 September 2018. The reality here is that children may be offered places at Northgate Primary or St. Nicholas Primary as they are within the 10 minute walking requirement. This may not link with nursery provision and does not guarantee that brothers and or sisters will be offered a place in the same school. Further, this raises the possibility of individual pupils moving schools more than once.

6. Displaced pupils

NAHT believes pupils will be displaced (as noted above) and parental choice will be severely restricted.

7. Impact on the community

NAHT recognises that Alderman Swindell and North Denes are both much-loved schools in the local community and that the responses to the initial consultation reflected a mixed view, however recognising here that a majority of respondents did not support the proposal and which it is critical to note, did not explicitly state that Alderman Swindell Primary School was to be closed. This opposition has grown across the communities, witnessed by the submission of a petition containing approx. 2500 signatures to the Children's Services Committee and the very recent public demonstration in the town itself.

The very speculative nature of the second paragraph (of 7.) is a cause of further concern. If any decision is related to another proposal, these must be considered

together (guidance for decision makers). If there is no genuine proposal, this shouldn't be included in the statutory proposal to close Alderman Swindell.

Yours faithfully,

Noel Glover
Regional Officer