



Paul Burnett
Northamptonshire County Council
John Dryden House
8-10 The Lakes
Northampton
NN4 7YD

2nd February 2010

Dear Paul

Re: Consultation 2011 Schools Admissions Arrangements for the South of Northampton

The Parish council is writing to present its response to the above consultation exercise which will primarily affect pupils hoping to attend Caroline Chisholm Secondary School.

We have read and digested the documents made available on the LEA web site, and have also spoken to a great number of 'stakeholders' within the Parish, including parents, pupils (to CCS and local primary schools), teachers, local businesses and other residents. A public meeting was held on 27th January, and this was well attended by local parents and residents.

After careful consideration of all the issues in hand, we would respond as follows:

This is obviously a very difficult decision to make. CCS has become very successful in a short period of time; however the growth of the local population means that current admission criteria are untenable. These have created division amongst School communities passing year 6, and close neighbours being unable to send their children to the same secondary school.

Indeed, there is no simple solution to this problem, with established entries at the school from both Wootton and Grange Park.

However, the council has taken a pragmatic long term view on the issue, and considers that the proposed 'Option D' is the most realistic and sustainable of the options discussed.

There are a number of reasons why the council considers this to be the case. These may be summarised as follows:

1) Traffic/Transportation/Road Safety

The current traffic situation within the Parish is very poor, and whilst many local schools suffer from school run congestion and parking issues, these are particularly severe along the Wooldale Road outside of CCS. Whilst some cars travel from Wootton to the school, the larger proportion are likely to originate from those homes furthest from the school, in particular the further parts of Grange Park.

Whilst the inclusion of Hardingstone within the school catchment may add some vehicles to the CCS school run, this is likely to be significantly outweighed by those not travelling from Grange Park. There is also a safe pedestrian route from Hardingstone to CCS (although a pedestrian crossing to the Newport Pagnell Road closer to the top of Wootton Hope Drive should be considered).

The LEA has identified potential savings on student transport, by ultimately removing transportation from Hardingstone to Roade (which currently passes the entrance of CCS), and providing coaches from Grange Park to Roade. In the context of Carbon emissions, this would demonstrate a reduction and environmental benefit.

2) School 'Stream' Cohesion

As already stated, the current policy results in school friends and neighbours being separated on the basis of where they live within the Parish. This seems very unfair, and leads to great worry and uncertainty leading up to the allocation of secondary school places.

LEA projections suggest that the situation will only worsen in the next 5 years.

The proposal made (Option D) would guarantee that school friends and local residents could remain together during the stressful transition from Primary to Secondary. This would also apply to Grange Park/Woodland View pupils who would be guaranteed places together at Roade.

Whilst there will be some transitional issues to overcome (with Siblings etc. from Grange Park) the long term solution will establish sustainable links from existing school communities, and allow Grange Park to grow without placing further strain on CCS admissions.

3) Community/Social Cohesion

The word 'community' has been used by many during this consultation, however the Parish of Wootton and East Hunsbury is proud to be a well established, integrated community (despite it's size!)

The current issues regarding oversubscription at CCS undermine community feeling, and have led to parents moving from the area.

In addition, there is evidence of a growing short-term rental market close to the school for parents looking to gain places then move away from the community.

It is a real shame that current admissions policy means the oldest most established part of the Parish – Wootton Village - faces the greatest uncertainty for year 6 pupils. The proposed changes would provide certainty for parents of children attending feeder schools, most of whom have families who have lived in the community for many years.

In addition, we consider that the inclusion of Hardingstone as a feeder community will enhance the rural aspect of the Parish, and CCS. The two Parishes already work collaboratively, and this link would further reinforced ties to these neighbouring communities.

4) Educational Standards/Social Responsibility

The Parish council also considers the wider aspects of academic standards and facilities available to all.

It must be borne in mind that many within the Parish already attend Abbeyfield and Roade schools. Whilst these have not received the recent academic plaudits of CCS, they are both established schools with great ambition and potential.

The council are keen that choice remains, and we are assured that places will remain available for a number East Hunsbury pupils who may choose to go to Roade.

Whilst there will always be a wish for parents to do the best for their children, we endorse the policy of raising academic standards across the LEA.

This will inevitably be a very tough decision for the County and LEA; however the long view must be taken for the development of both Wootton and Grange Park communities.

Whilst we have the greatest sympathy with Parents and pupils whose expectations will have to be altered, this is ultimately the most pragmatic solution to what must be considered an error in medium to long term planning by the LEA in previous years.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Saunders
Parish Clerk