

Consultation on Eastern Area Re-organisation Proposals (Second Round)

Meeting held at Church Lawford First School

on 6 July 1994

Notes of the meeting:

Present: Approximately 45 parents, governors, staff and members of the community.
County Councillors: Ken Browne and Phillip Morris Jones
Diocesan Representative: Clive Taylor
LEA Officers: Colin James, David Bristow and Nick Williams (Clerk)

The Chairman of Governors, Howard Parvin, addressed the meeting. The County Council have taken on board our document and have named Wolston St Margaret's as an alternative - this is the last of our preferences. Our aim is to keep a school at Church Lawford. Our feelings are of anger about several things. Councillor Browne did not believe what we wrote that the school is an integral part of the community. We are angry that the Diocesan representative on the Education Committee voted for this school to close. Had he voted the other way it would have been even. We are angry that the Education Committee should dare to destroy a school on a 16:15 vote. Our document shows the quality of the school - it is excellence worth saving. Church Lawford is the best of what a rural school should be, a shining example, and should not be closed. When LMS was introduced it was said this school was not viable but we have proved otherwise. Our numbers are increasing and will continue to do so if the threat of closure is removed. We could operate a viable all through primary school here. Three years ago we pleaded with the Education Committee for the opportunity to show what we could do. I challenge the Education Committee now to do as then and allow us to demonstrate that we can deliver. Give us a temporary classroom and allow us to operate as an all through school.

We invite every Member of the Education Committee to visit Church Lawford before they make this decision so that they can see what they propose to destroy.

As the play group supervisor I support what has been said about increasing numbers. The majority of children come from out of the village as there are no pre-school places. Parents then see an excellent school for their children to go to. We know of 12 coming in September and there will be more. We already have some names for 1995. I know now of families with babies who will come here - don't just look at your office figures.

All the literature refers to "quality". If this school closes can we be assured of the same quality elsewhere? I know of classes of 30 or rooms that can't accommodate that many. We hear that some specialist rooms eg. music will revert to become classrooms. Facilities will be lost. Education is paramount - money must be found to keep excellence for all children in Warwickshire.

What do you consider to be an ideal class size?

How much will you save here to spend elsewhere to get the other school to take our children? Wolston St Margaret's is a CE School. One of the priorities for our parents is a Church School - could Wolston take them all?

Is the cost of a new classroom worth destroying a village school? The costs will not just be a new classroom since you will need extra teachers at the new school.

Who will pay for transport to Wolston? Will safety be considered?

How can you justify spending £1 million for a new school at Brinklow when you could extend this school for £140,000? Where will this new school be? It seems that something 'fishy' is going on.

This is a Christian community and people from outside want to be part of it.

It would be better for Members to visit individually.

After 1996 pre school facilities will cease as small schools close and others take more children.

There have been concerns about transport and I now bring my child myself.

This school used to operate as an all through primary, why not transport Brinklow children here?

In my letter to the County Council I asked about the calculation of surplus places. Open Enrolment sounds like moving the goal posts. A lot has been made of children coming from out of the priority area but the vast majority come for the excellence of education and Christian ethos. As a member of the clergy I feel let down by the Church of England. Not just here but parents throughout Warwickshire have been let down. What about parental choice? With regard to transport, tendering will probably mean you get the cheapest and shoddiest. You should get it right now.

There is anger that the one vote which nominated this school for closure was unelected being from the CE Diocese. This is not democratic.

Price Waterhouse gave an optimum class size of 30 - this is not proven. The problem is also an urban one and not a rural problem.

Safety may be a problem since you propose to bus smaller children along country lanes. The fact that there is a large number of out of area children is a recognition of quality of education here. People want this.

How can you justify borrowing £20 million with interest plus £1 million on a new school at Brinklow? This doesn't seem a very good saving.

There is no provision here for children to wait for buses. Who will pay the fares? Have you considered using the old Wolston High School rather than building a new school in Brinklow?

You say that rural schools should be in keeping with the rural community. Such a large school as Brinklow could hardly be termed a 'rural' school.

This school is like a happy family. It would break my child's heart to move him. This is where they get the best education which is what is most important for us.

Many parents choose to send their children here even though other schools are closer.

Since the last re-organisation 20 years ago it has taken a long time to build up. People move to the village because of the school. The community can be built up.

Older children come here for the Youth Club which is part of the community. This is the only place in the village for a Youth Club. Why are you proposing to close this building and keep other old buildings open?

Does it matter where a child comes from so long as they are receiving a good education?

Councillor Morris Jones:-

It is said that it costs 40% more to educate children here but we know how much more expensive it is living in the country. We have no library, whereas the towns do. We hear that a larger school should provide a broader education but we in the country have different views. I don't think people in urban areas understand transport problems - they can have a damaging effect on a child and cause stress for children and working mothers. The school is the soul of a community. In the Fosse Division so many schools have closed. Collectivism and conformity is favoured by the County Council but we don't agree. I question the philosophy - this is an excellent school and the County Council are condemning the wisdom of their predecessors by saying that a mistake has been made. Nothing has changed to make change necessary.

This village needs a church and a school. This village is more historic than Leamington or Stratford.

You don't seem to take account of views. Rather than using losing surplus places you are removing parental choice. This is the church school for Newbold and Long Lawford. This building is modern. Why destroy this school but retain Leamington Hastings and Bubbenhall as an annexe? Why was Bubbenhall moved to eastern area?

The government is in favour of rural schools but you are closing them. You would be better to expand us and Monks Kirby and leave Brinklow as it is. Spread the places across the Revel area.

My children were previously in the private sector and I was not satisfied but I am very happy since my child came here, the school feels 'right'.

The votes taken in committee were on political lines not on individual cases. I think that is wrong. Had the church already decided that Canon Eardley would vote to close this school?

My child is due to start here next year. The threat of closure does not deter me.

We have people who come here to teach the children on a voluntary basis. The school is open for things like this.

It is hard to run a Youth Club in the current financial climate. If the school closes where would the Youth Club go?

Will the Secretary of State order the decision or civil servants?

Baroness Blatch has given an assurance that the Secretary of State will decide.

You referred to £2000 per pupil. Does that include children with SEN?

What do you intend to do with the building if the school closes?

What is in it for the church if this school closes?

Do you not consider Inspectors reports when looking at the future of a school?

It takes a long time to build high standards which is what we now have.

If we can't change your decision why are we here?

Parents know what is best for their child. Those who make the decision won't be affected.

If quality is not being considered and the schools are not as good what happens to our children if they have to go elsewhere?

Have you looked at the problem of junior schools losing the funding for Year 7?

Globally education is in turmoil. Would you not be better holding on to your quality schools given the uncertainty.?

We know of 11 children who are due to come here in 1995. Others would send their children here if it was an all through primary. We attract children from all over Rugby.

I would like to thank our governors and councillors, particularly the Chair and Vice Chair who have put together a strong case on our behalf.

If the school runs out of money the Friends Association and community would support them.

The Chair of Governors, Howard Parvin made a closing statement:

You now know that this is not a soft option. You know now how we feel. We already have excellence of education. If we continue and become non viable, I will come to the Education Committee and ask for the school to close. I don't believe that day will come. We would like the chance to remain open. Give us a temporary classroom, lift the threat of closure and we will deliver. If we don't I will come to the Education Committee and ask for the school to close.