

Mr Meredith, Mr Robinson,

Re: CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE:
POSSIBLE POSITION STATEMENT

Since the confidential draft of this document is now in the public domain, and since it is labelled a "possible position statement", I feel that you still have room for correction of factual inaccuracies.

The part of the document dealing with Haywood High reads as follows: "The roll is expected to fall to 965 by 2014. Despite the offer of a new build on the Bank Top Acreswood site, public consultation showed strong support for the school, and a resistance to agree to any changes. 504 individual responses were received, and a petition of 5,829 names was submitted. The responses argued strongly that the school should be left unchanged. Although the school is popular in the local area, the most recent exam results suggest that the school is just above Government baseline expectations in terms of GCSE attainment, including English and Maths. Additionally the school site does not meet BB98 requirements for more than 750 students, and cannot be expanded. In view of this, it is not proposed to make any major investment at the school, but to refurbish it towards the end of the BSF programme in 2012 or 2013".

This statement shows that those involved in the consultation process may have listened to the community, but they failed miserably to hear what was being said.

"The roll is expected to fall to 965 by 2014". ONS statistics for this part of the City dispute these figures. I believe that Mill Hill Primary School was rebuilt to a size based on projected pupil numbers, and that these figures have proved to be woefully inaccurate. Simple, non-statistical, observation indicates that the number of pre-school and primary school aged children in this part of the City is currently rising quite rapidly.

"Despite the offer of a new build on the Bank Top Acreswood site, public consultation showed strong support for the school, and a resistance to agree to any changes". Factually the second part of this statement is wrong. When Mr Robinson stood up during the 15th November 2007 meeting at Haywood High, he asked three questions.

- 1) "Do you accept that change must take place?"
- 2) "Do you want Haywood to close?"
- 3) "Do you want the school to remain on its current site?"

The unequivocal answers received from the Community were "Yes", "No" and "Yes" respectively. Both of you heard the Community accepting that change must take place. But were you really listening to the words? To sign a document that claims that there was "resistance to agree to any changes" would be dishonest and unethical.

"The responses argued strongly that the school should be left unchanged". The true argument was that the school should remain on its current site - not unchanged. Witness "Project Aiming Higher" - cancelled by the Council when the closure of Haywood was mooted. The School and Community want change, but on Haywood's current site.

"Although the school is popular in the local area, the most recent exam results suggest that the school is just above Government baseline expectations in terms of GCSE attainment, including English and Maths". The point is that the school is above the Governments baseline, and is improving (score of 1006). With help from both the Community and the Council it can, and will, improve.

"Additionally the school site does not meet BB98 requirements for more than 750 students, and cannot be expanded". It is my understanding that BB98 is for guidance only. It does not set out "requirements". (Building Bulletin 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects Incorporating secondary school revisions to BB82: Area Guidelines for Schools). Haywood could quite easily be designated as a "confined site" which would totally nullify this argument,

"In view of this, it is not proposed to make any major investment at the school, but to refurbish it towards the end of the BSF programme in 2012 or 2013". Surely, Haywood is entitled to some of the BSF money on offer. This statement makes it look like the Council will try, over the coming years, to break the community down by failing to provide adequate funding for proper refurbishment of the school. This smacks of revenge by the Council on a Community that dared to stand up and be counted.

Please, gentlemen, revise this document before you sign it.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Meredith, Mr Robinson

Upon reading further this leaked document, I came across the following:

"Holden Lane High School is already designated as a specialist sports college and, although the site size is not extensive, it can continue to meet the needs of the community with refurbishment. It is proposed that support be given to this school for a change of status, but that no changes requiring statutory notices be carried out. The School governors have expressed some concerns about the process of seeking Foundation status and further discussions will continue".

According to all the measures that you have used in your process, the Holden Lane site is too small for a school of the proposed size. Why is Haywood being penalised for having a small site, while Holden Lane is not?

Maybe your document ought to contain something along the lines of:

"Haywood High School is already designated as a specialist Engineering College and, although the site size is not extensive, it can continue to meet the needs of the community with refurbishment. It is proposed that support be given to this school for consolidating its status as a Foundation School, but that no changes requiring statutory notices be carried out. The School governors have expressed concerns about the Council stalling on the finalisation of the process of acquiring Foundation status and further discussions will continue".

This would give hope to the Community that you are not vindictively seeking to close Haywood through inaction, and that each school in Stoke-on-Trent is being given equal attention.

Please level the playing fields - whether they be on-site or not!

Yours sincerely,