

## **Appendix 1**

**Cabinet, 12 January 2005**

### **The Future for Primary Schools in Rye**

#### **Analysis of responses to consultation**

##### **1. Overview**

This report provides information on and result of the public consultation on the five options for change for the Future of Primary Schools in Rye. The consultation extended from Monday 15 November to Friday 17 December 2005.

##### **2. Consultation**

###### *2.1 The process*

2.1.1 The consultation period lasted five weeks and was designed to encourage responses from existing and future parents, and those involved with or interested in primary education in Rye. The consultation paper 'The Future for Primary Schools in Rye' outlined the challenges and opportunities and detailed the five options for change being considered.

2.1.2 The document was available in hard copy and electronically. 1000 copies were printed. 966 were distributed (with a response form and pre paid envelope) by hand, pupil post and direct mailing. The remainder were circulated at events and meetings. A list of who the consultation paper was sent to is at Annex A. Copies were also available via the Rye Library and on the East Sussex County Council web site.

2.1.3 The consultation included 7 meetings; two public meetings led by senior officers of ESCC Education & Libraries Department, and five meetings dedicated to both staff and governors of Tilling Green and Freda Gardham Schools and the governors of Thomas Peacocke Community College. In addition to these formal meetings there have been ongoing discussions with headteachers, planning officers, education advisers and others seeking views and advice on each option.

###### *2.2 Results and Analysis*

2.2.1 The response form and consultation events were designed to encourage comments on each of the options and views on the future of primary school provision in Rye. They were not designed to be a referendum. However, respondents generally highlighted their preferred option. Key issues in relation to each option from both the written responses and consultation events are outlined in Annex B. Key issues and concerns by theme are detailed in section 3.

The results have been analysed and reported in two ways:

###### *2.2.2 An analysis of responses:*

2.2.2.1 63 written responses were received. Of these, 28 were from parents; 6 responses were made by Governors which include representations on behalf of Governors of Tilling Green, Freda Gardham and Thomas Peacocke Community College; 6 from parent governors; 1 response from a parent teacher; 13 responses from staff and 9 responses from others which included representations from the NUT; a Rother District Councillor; Rye Town Council and the Bexhill and Rother PCT Lead Nurse. The table below shows responses along with preferred option where indicated.

2.2.2.2 The majority of responses support a single school based either on the Freda Gardham site or a new site; 12 responses were in favour of refurbishment on the Freda Gardham; 17 responses were in favour of new build on the Freda Gardham site and 25 were in favour of new build on a new site. Overall, a larger volume of response was received from staff, governors and parents of children at Freda Gardham in favour of a school remaining on the Freda Gardham site.

2.2.2.3 Formal responses were received by governors of the three schools in Rye: Tilling Green, Freda Gardham and Thomas Peacocke. Each of the governing bodies supports the development of a new primary school. Both Tilling Green and Thomas Peacocke governors support a new school on a new site; Freda Gardham's governors' preference is for a new school on the Freda Gardham site. However, whilst Freda Gardner governors have reservations on the option of a new school on a new site, they do agree it would have some merits. The governors' full responses are attached in Annex D

**Table 1**

	Number of Responses	Preferred Option (if stated)					
		1	2	3	4	5	No Pref.
Parent/Guardian	28	-	9	7	9	2	1
Governor	6	-	2	1	3	-	-
Parent Governor	6	-	-	-	3	1	2
Parent Teacher	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
School Staff	13	-	1	7	5	-	-
Other	9	-	-	1	5	-	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

2.2.2.4 The overall response rate was 6.5% (of the 966 documents distributed, 63 responses were received).

2.2.3 *An analysis of the issues raised through formal responses and during the consultation events:*

2.2.3.1 Responses have been analysed by option and by theme. Annex B lists the issues raised and comments by option. Section 3 of this report highlights the key issues raised by theme.

2.2.3.2 Annex C details the consultation meetings and events which took place as part of the consultation. In total, 110 people attended. It is not possible to ascertain whether the attendees were the same people (parents, Governors,

staff) who returned response forms. Notes were taken at each meeting, which are available in the Members' Room, as are copies of all responses received, and the key issues have been distilled into Annex B and section 3 of this report.

### 3. The Issues Raised

- 3.1 The consultation provided a varied response. However, there was a general consensus that something must be done to address falling rolls in the two Rye primary schools and recognition that option 1 - Do Nothing, was not viable in the long term. There were opposing views on the remaining four options. Whilst option 5 was supported by three respondents it was generally acknowledged that the prohibitive cost meant it was not necessarily the most cost effective.
- 3.2 A number of issues were raised which fell into distinct categories. These issues are detailed below (they are not listed in order of priority):

#### **Issue 1 - Accessibility, location and pupil safety**

Concerns were raised over safety and ease of access to sites. Concerns applied to both a refurbished/new school on the Freda Gardham site as well as access to a new school on a new site. Particular concerns were raised over any increase in traffic in the town centre at school drop-off and pick-up times, the proximity to the railway line, railway crossing and fire station, and additional traffic on Thursday (market day).

#### **Issue 2 – Size of School (pupil numbers and buildings) and co location with a secondary school**

Views of parents conflicted either in favour of small or large primary schools. However, concerns over size and character were raised by some parents who felt that an amalgamation and development of a new school would mean a loss of the 'small school' environment. Parents were concerned that a new build or refurbishment of Freda Gardham (which some parents see as imposing and intimidating to small children) would not be in line with the educational need. It was suggested that a new build, 'bigger' school, would result in more parents choosing village schools rather than encourage children back to Rye.

A key issue for parents and teachers was the importance of ensuring the separation between primary and secondary education. If a school were to co-locate with Thomas Peacocke it was believed to be essential that the primary school retains its own teaching staff, identity and character. Some parents were concerned that the co-location of a primary and secondary school would be detrimental and intimidating for the younger children.

#### **Issue 3 – Disruption**

Concerns were raised by parents and staff over possible disruption and the need for continuity dependent on the option chosen. Issues included whether Freda Gardham and Tilling Green would 'merge' before a new school was built; disruption to teaching and the environment if a new school was built adjacent to Freda Gardham whilst Freda Gardham was still in session.

**Issue 4 - Staff**

Staff and Governors were concerned over continuity and potential job losses as a result of the 'merging' of two schools onto a new site. A number of parents believed that it would be difficult to retain staff during a period of change/transition.

**Issue 5 – Loss of playing fields and recreational space.**

The loss of any playing fields, co-sharing of playing field and games facilities were identified as a key concern. Reduced access to recreational facilities, particularly having to travel to use recreational facilities, was deemed as detrimental to a new school.

**Issue 6 – Review of village schools and choice**

Concern was raised that an option considering one or more of the village schools had not been included. It was felt that admissions criteria were not necessarily enforced which meant that Rye children were able to choose village schools over the Rye schools. There was concern around how choice was managed in terms of meeting long term needs and balancing budgets.

**Issue 7 – Length of consultation**

Concern was raised in formal responses and at the meetings over the length of the consultation which some argued was too short. This was a particular point made in the response from the NUT.

**Issue 8 – Planning restrictions**

Concerns relating to planning consents and issues around flooding were raised by most consultees. There are conflicting views from respondents on the flood risk attached to the Freda Gardham and Thomas Peacocke sites.

**4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The consultation has enabled the County Council to consider the merits and disadvantages of each option in a clear and constructive way. However, the overall response to the consultation was low with almost half the responses coming from staff and governors. Despite efforts made, it is disappointing that more responses were not received from parents.
- 4.2 Those who returned response forms and who attended the consultation meetings unanimously acknowledged and supported the need for change in Rye, particularly the need to address the issue of falling rolls and the reasons why increasing numbers of Rye parents were choosing village schools.
- 4.3 There is a clear and general consensus that Option 1 is not viable in the long term, and that Option 5 is too costly and the least appropriate given potential falling numbers.
- 4.4 Whilst common ground was shared on issues such as access, the co-location of services, extended schools and the need to maintain a 'small school' character in a safe, clean and airy environment, there is split consensus on the location of a new school. It is clear that emotional attachments to the schools are strong.

## Appendix 1, Annex A - Consultation paper distribution

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### The Future for Primary Schools in Rye

Consultation papers were distributed to the following:

Who	Number	Distributed by
Staff at Tilling Green	20	By Hand
Staff at Freda Gardham	60	By Hand
Governors at Tilling Green	6	By Hand
Governors at Freda Gardham	10	By Hand
Parents, Tilling Green	60	Pupil Post
Parents, Freda Gardham	220	Pupil Post
ESCC Local Members	2	Direct Mail
Rother District Council members	9	Direct Mail
Rother District Council	2	Direct Mail
Headteachers & Chair of Governors of Rye Village schools	18	Direct Mail
Headteacher & Governors at Thomas Peacocke	8	By Hand
Rye Town Council	2	Direct Mail
Camber Parish Council	1	Direct Mail
Rye Nursery & Pre schools	3	Direct Mail
Parents, Brede	132	Pupil post
Parents, St Thomas' Winchelsea	145	Pupil Post
Parents, Peasmarsh	105	Pupil Post
Parents, St Michaels Playden	109	Pupil Post
Diocese of Arundel & Brighton	1	Direct Mail
Diocese of Chichester	2	Direct Mail
School Improvement Service	5	Electronically
ESCC	12	Electronically
Rother & Bexhill PCT	2	Direct Mail
Papers distributed at meetings and events	28	By Hand
Request for papers	4	
Total Distributed	966	

In addition an advert notifying the public of the public consultation meeting was placed in the Battle and Rye Observer on Friday 17 November.

The consultation was also placed on the East Sussex County Web Site for the duration of the consultation period.

Copies of the paper were also made available at each of the public meetings and staff and Governor Consultations.

## **Appendix 1, Annex B – Key Issues by Option**

**Cabinet, 12 January 2005**

### **The Future for Primary Schools in Rye**

The comments under each option are taken from the written responses and from notes of the consultation meetings.

#### **Option 1: Do nothing, other than reduce surplus places at the Rye Schools**

- TG is surplus to requirements
- Need to revisit figures as foresee increase in reception class numbers in Sept 2006 based on increased playgroups numbers.

#### **Option 2: Develop Freda Gardham as a 1.5 form entry primary school with 10 or 11 classes and close Tilling Green**

- FG is attractive & spacious site. Buildings are light.
- Site would need massive amount of refurbishment, but could be refurbished whilst retaining character of older buildings.
- Having larger primary school on edge of town would still mean a minimum 15-20 minute walk – retaining FG would not have a major impact on accessibility.
- would prefer FG refurbished during holidays without disrupting children
- southerly aspect of classrooms along with SW wind provides fresh air
- Cheaper option, and therefore better use of ESCC budget?
- FG needs replacing not refurbishment. School designed as secondary school not primary.

#### **Option 3: Build a new 1.5 form entry school on the Freda Gardham site, demolishing the existing building and close Tilling Green**

- Public money shouldn't be spent on rebuilding when refurbishing would suffice.
- Concern that rebuilding would mean disruption
- Suggest separate infant school on FG site
- Rebuild on FG could also accommodate other services ie education psychologist, school nurse etc
- FG is biggest and most easily accessible site – however, would need improved parking.
- FG has never flooded despite risk.

#### **Option 4: Provide a new 1.5 form entry school on a new site in Rye, closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham**

- would mean less disruption
- Good central location, though would need to consider vehicular access
- Sale of existing primary schools could be reinvested
- Sites for development are limited – TP is unsuitable due to poor vehicular access
- Intimidating for children walking to and from the TP site, particularly for those with special educational needs (SEN).
- Transition between primary & secondary would improve.
- Daunting for primary children to co-locate with secondary. Though co-locating infant & primary would be good.
- FG is dilapidated and the classrooms are odd shaped! – building a new school with modern facilities is preferable.
- Too close to main road, rail track, fire station etc
- TP would not be able to use playing field?

- Prone to flooding.
- Concern over timescale and deliverability eg if allotment land was to be used/land swap.

**Option 5: Provide a new 1.5 form entry school on a new site in Rye, closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham**

- Good option as long as roll from Camber increases.
- Costly
- Camber too small for its own school
- Reduce travel time for Camber children by at least half and would mean that young children wouldn't need to travel by bus.
- Where would a school go?
- Planned housing development will increase number of children, therefore requiring own school.

**General Comments**

- Children with SEN should be evenly distributed amongst Rye area schools – not just at TG & FG which reduces appeal & therefore numbers on roll
- Review of funding for FG is required. Suggested that reorganizing the school provision will not solve funding issue at FG
- If TG is sold, receipt must be used for primary education in Rye and not diverted elsewhere.
- Concern for staff of FG & TG
- There should be stricter guidelines to avoid parents choosing village schools. This would ensure numbers at TG & FG remain viable.
- Preference for small school not a small building to ensure friendly and supportive atmosphere. Village schools provide the small school atmosphere.
- All through primary will negate need to move children (as with Tilling Green) after 3 years.
- Request that a smaller school is rebuilt on FG site.
- Preference for new school to be a Church of England School
- Tilling Green has a good reputation – disappointing that rolls are falling
- Public transport routes would need to be reviewed to accommodate new school (on new site) and increased numbers.
- Timescale of the consultation is too short to enable fully considered responses.
- Belief that looking at two Rye schools in isolation is flawed, and that village schools should be included in the review.
- Education arguments should supersede Environment Agency's considerations. Flood risks could be mitigated. The LEA should look at best practice in Holland.
- Request that LEA consider lessons learnt from previous PFI projects

- Appendix 1, Annex C – Consultation meetings

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The Future for Primary Schools in Rye

Date & Time	Venue	Group Type	No	LEA Reps	Requirements/ Notes
23/11/2004 3.30pm	Tilling Green School	Staff & union reps	10	Matt Dunkley Michael Nix Sarah Lamy Carole Bartholomew	Issues around loss of small school environment and timescales
23/11/2004 5.30pm	Tilling Green School	Governors	8	Matt Dunkley Michael Nix Sarah Lamy	Concern over school closure. Consensus that falling roll will make school unviable in long term. Concern that merger will end character of small school.
24/11/2004	Freda Gardham	Staff & union reps	26	Matt Dunkley Michael Nix Elaine Codling	
24/11/2004	Freda Gardham	Governors	7	Matt Dunkley Michael Nix	
1/12/2004 5pm	Thomas Peacocke CC	Governors	7	Matt Dunkley Michel Nix Sarah Lamy	Positive response. Embrace opportunity to co-locate and develop extended school ethos and for smooth transition.
1/12/2004 7pm	Thomas Peacocke	Public	47	Matt Dunkley Michael Nix Sarah Lamy Nina Siddall Yvonne Lloyd	
14/12/2004 6.30pm	Camber Memorial Hall	Parents/public	5	Michael Nix Sarah Lamy	

## **Appendix 1, Annex D – Governor Responses**

**Cabinet, 12 January 2005**

### **The Future for Primary Schools in Rye**

5 North Salts  
Rye  
East Sussex  
TN31 7NU

16<sup>th</sup> December  
2004

Dear Mr Nix,

#### **The Future for Primary Schools in Rye- Consultation Paper**

I write this response in my capacity as Chair of Governors at Thomas Peacocke Community College in Rye.

Given the present and future likely situation in Rye with regard to pupil numbers the viability of the existing Rye town providers is in serious jeopardy. The parents in Rye are and have been increasingly choosing to send their children to schools other than Tilling Green and Freda Gardham. For these reasons we feel that urgent change is necessary. To delay would seriously harm the educational opportunities for the young people presently at both schools and future cohorts.

Our preferred option is option 4

***Provide a new 1.5 form entry school on a new site in Rye, closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham***

This option gives real opportunities to develop a truly extended educational provision on one site. We support the construction of a new, independently operated, primary school on the Thomas Peacocke campus. This enables the achievement of something radically different to the all of the other options and in our view has the potential to influence very positively family life in this area.

New build, as outlined, has been proven in other educational institutions to have significant impact on both recruitment and retention of young people and educational professionals alike.

This proposal presents a very exciting opportunity for our town.

We do very much hope that the East Sussex County Council Cabinet views the merits of this option favourably.

Yours sincerely.

Elizabeth M Baldwin  
Chair of Governors  
Thomas Peacocke Community College

Freda Gardham Community  
Primary School  
New Road  
Rye  
East Sussex  
TN31 7LS

13 December 2004

Director of Education PPR/S1  
Education Department  
P O Box 4  
County Hall  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 1SG

### **The Future of Primary Schools in Rye**

Dear Madam,

The Governing Body of Freda Gardham Community Primary School would like to submit the following response to your consultation paper.

#### **Option 1**

##### **Do Nothing, other than reduce surplus places at the Rye schools**

This is not considered to be a viable option in terms of quality of education for Rye children and long term financial management at both Rye town schools.

#### **Option 2**

##### **Develop Freda Gardham as a 1.5 form entry primary school with 10 or 11 classes and close Tilling Green**

Refurbishment of the existing Freda Gardham buildings would be prohibitively expensive and incur a continual commitment to large building maintenance costs. This would prove to be an additional drain on annual revenue and capital school budgets.

### **Option 3**

#### **Build a new 1.5 form entry school on the Freda Gardham site, demolishing the existing building and close Tilling Green**

This is the preferred option of the Freda Gardham Governors for the following reasons:-

- The site is already owned by East Sussex County Council
- The site is already recognised as an educational site and as such will not need change of use permission.
- Mr M Dunkley confirmed that the Environment Agency is reluctant to allow residential or commercial development on this site thus making it the ideal location for continued educational use.
- Parents and local residents already accept the fact that a school is located at this site, thus negating the need for extensive persuasion to possible objections
- We know, as a result of a meeting with Mr M Dunkley, that the planning regulations will allow development to the size of the current footprint
- Flooding has not been recently known at this site
- The new school, if built on this site will readily accommodate new partners and clearly address issues raised in “Every Child Matters”.
- A development at this location would fulfil the Government agenda for delivering co-located services whilst maintaining the essence of a local primary school. Freda Gardham has already made strong links with local partners including Surestart Nursery provision, Speech and Language unit and others.
- This site contains the most potential for buses to deliver children from Camber and Rye Harbour, the major rural catchment areas for Rye town schools.
- The unique outdoor environment has been praised by Ofsted and is exceptional for delivering sport and greater community uses.
- Building on the existing footprint will not disturb the environmentally protected newts which currently co-exist with Freda Gardham.
- Many parents and governors are reluctant for young primary school children to be located side by side with young adults. Concern focuses on leading role models, the opportunity for bad language, dress code and imitation of inappropriate adolescent behaviour.
- Governors would welcome a new name, chosen by the school community, for a new joint school on this site to encourage ownership by all parents and pupils.

#### **Option 4**

##### **Provide a new 1.5 form entry school on a new site in Rye, closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham**

This option fulfils some of the merits of Option 3 with the following reservations

- Governors are concerned that a move to the lower school site would facilitate a federation school with the potential loss of a dedicated Primary Headteacher whose focus is on the younger children in our community. The loss of a Primary Headteacher post is considered to be detrimental to education in Rye.
- Access to the site is a serious issue. New access would need to address buses visiting twice a day and parents delivering children in a quiet residential area. This would have a major impact on the communities currently living in this area.
- Use of a detached field would cause unnecessary health and safety issues concerning the transport of children to and from the facility
- There may be conflict regarding the sharing of facilities. In the event of a dispute who would have prior call, the senior or the infant/junior school?
- The lower site has little opportunity for expansion in the future
- Flooding has already occurred in recent months
- Local residents may consider the development unfavourably when they realise that local allotment facilities will be removed.

#### **Option 5**

##### **Provide a new one form entry (seven classes) school in Rye and a new four class school at Camber closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham**

- Governors question the viability of this option in terms of school rolls and the number of available children.
- Costs may be prohibitive.
- This would not address the issues raised in "Every Child Matters".

### **Additional Comments for consideration**

- Parents have commented that the consultation period appears to be extremely short
- Many residents within Rye and the surrounding catchment area are unaware of the potential educational developments and the consultation documentation, with associated repercussions
- Few residents were aware of consultation meetings and the possible impact on their local environment of planning proposals
- As a response to a request from Freda Gardham governors a meeting has been arranged for Camber parents, with a bus from Rye Harbour. This sadly conflicts with the Freda Gardham School Christmas concert and parents have expressed their inability to support their children at both events. Perhaps an additional consultation opportunity would underline East Sussex County Council's willingness to embrace inclusive consultation opportunities.
- Although this was negated at a local meeting, local residents feel that the existing documentation suggests that Option 4 is East Sussex' s preferred choice
- The documentation focuses on only two schools, Freda Gardham and Tilling Green. It ignores the education provision in the surrounding villages. We would welcome the inclusion of these schools in finding a solution to education provision in the wider Rye catchment area.

Freda Gardham Community School governors would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to your proposals. We are firmly committed to ensuring the continuity of good quality education to local children in a safe local setting with minimal disruption. In addition we confirm our determination to offer secure employment to the dedicated professionals currently employed by both Freda Gardham and Tilling Green schools.

We look forward to working with you on our common goal to provide a dynamic solution to education provision in the Rye Area.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Valerie Wright  
Chair of Governors  
Freda Gardham Community Primary School

CORPORATE RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNORS OF  
TILLING GREEN INFANTS SCHOOL



## Primary Schools in Rye: Consultation Response Form

Please use this form to give your views on the options outlined in the Consultation Paper and return to the County Council in the enclosed pre-paid envelope by Friday 17 December 2004

This is an opportunity for you to comment on the options outlined in the Consultation Paper. Please provide your comments on the options and views on the future of primary school provision in Rye in the space below. (Continue on a separate sheet, if necessary.)

Dear Mr. Dunkerley,

### The Future for Primary Schools in Rye

I am responding on behalf of the Governors of Tilling Green Infants School to the above consultation paper which, together with Michael Nix and Sarah Lamy, you presented to us on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

You asked in particular that the governors should reply to the five options presented and our views are as follows:-

**Option 1: Do nothing**

Purely on the basis that the predictions in the discussion paper are correct, the governors agree that there are in the future likely to be insufficient children to sustain the school in its present form and with the existing budget provision.

**Option 2: Develop Freda Gardham as a 1.5 form entry primary school with 10 or 11 classes and close Tilling Green**

The Governors would be opposed to this option for the following reasons:-

- The continued use of the Freda Gardham building would almost guarantee the continuance of the "Rye Flight Factor". Many parents will continue to prefer the village school option.
- The site is remote from the centre of Rye and seriously inconvenient to children on the western side of town.
- Particularly because of the single footpath access on Mont Bretton Bridge, traffic conditions are dangerous to those walking to school.
- There is a potential risk that the building will be affected by sea flooding.

Title:  Parent/guardian  School Staff  
 Governor  Other (please state)

**Thank you for completing this form**

This information can be made available in other formats on request. Please contact Sarah Lamy on 01273 82982.



**Option 3: Build a new 1.5 form entry school on the Freda Gardham site, demolishing the existing building and close Tilling Green**

This option is not favoured for the reasons given b-d above:

- e. The site is remote from the centre of Rye and seriously inconvenient to children on the western side of town.
- f. Particularly because of the single footpath access on Mont Bretton Bridge, traffic conditions are dangerous to those walking to school.
- g. There is a potential risk that the building will be affected by sea flooding.

**Option 4: Provide a new 1.5 form entry school on a new site in Rye, closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham.**

The Governors believe that within this option lays the best hope of improving future primary schooling for Rye children. Such a school would need to be located on a suitable central position with due regard being had to all necessary factors.

It is understood that the earliest date by which a new school could be opened would be September 2007. Delay beyond this date would have a detrimental impact on the morale of the whole school community.

**Option 5: Provide a new one form entry (seven classes) school in Rye and a new four class school at Camber closing both Tilling Green and Freda Gardham**

Every reference to this option has been accompanied by a warning that it is likely to be too expensive and unlikely to be a serious alternative. However if a more detailed study shows that the number of Camber children is likely to grow to sustainable levels, then we believe that a separate primary school would be an advantage to both communities.

The governors appreciate the full and patient way that you and your team have presented this matter and we look forward to your further advice as to progress.

Yours sincerely,

  
John Gurney  
Chair of Governors Tilling Green Infants School

