

JSHS A04.

**The Office of Carl Sargeant AM
Alyn & Deeside Constituency**

School Modernisation Team
Education and Youth
County Hall
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 6ND



Our Ref: CS/JSHS/LJE

15 July 2015

Response to John Summers High School Consultation

Dear School Modernisation Team

I understand the financial pressures caused by budget cuts from the UK government, and recognise the need to comply with government surplus place policy. However as a council you must demonstrate that you have considered the full impact on learners and communities - and I am not convinced that this consultation document has adequately achieved this.

The document seems to give too little consideration to the impact the proposals could have on the capacity of schools surrounding John Summers High School. There is historic data on numbers at John Summers but not for nearby schools. Similarly there should be projections for the next five years for all nearby schools, not just John Summers. Neither is there sufficient detail on how the extra pupils would be absorbed and how the admissions policies of the nearby schools would need to change to take account of distance and sibling factors.

The consultation document does not fully explore the impact closure would have on the quality of education and leadership in other schools. There is no assessment by the authority of its view on the quality of education and leadership in the other schools, and it is vague on the effects on the curriculums at these schools. This is of concern, especially when your own officers have publicly praised John Summers' excellent improvements in education and leadership and its inclusive community ethos.

Transport is of concern as the document states many families would not qualify for free transport but there are bus and walking routes available. Free transport is available for those three or more miles away from their alternative school choice (2.5 miles if on income support). However the school is in an area of deprivation and there will be many families falling below this distance. There will be enormous financial and safety implications for these families. They may not be able to afford extra bus fares nor be able to walk with their children along dangerous routes if they have children at junior schools near to John Summers.

The document data is presented very poorly and often with no explanation, making it difficult to follow. The school governors have challenged the data, I hope that if the

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Dear Mr Sargeant,

Response to John Summer High School Consultation

Thank you for your correspondence dated 15th July 2015 regarding the above.

The consultation documentation has included past, current and projected pupil number data. It has included capacity, unfilled places and admissions information for John Summers High School and the surrounding local secondary schools at Hawarden, Connah's Quay and St David's High School Saltney. There is capacity in other schools to cater for all displaced pupils should John Summers High School close. As of September 2016 there will be a projected 586 unfilled places at Connah's Quay High School (307) and Saltney St David's High School (279).

Hawarden High School has a capacity of 1145 and is currently full, drawing parental preferences from 22 primary schools. However, if John Summers High School is closed the school will become the nearest school for some pupils currently in primary education who would normally transfer to John Summers High School. Hawarden High School has an admission number of 195. Places would be managed in line with admission criteria and those for whom it is the nearest school will take priority for places, displacing intake to the school from pupils expressing a preference from further afield.

John Summers High School has the lowest local transfer rate from its consortium primary schools by a considerable margin. This is certainly the case when directly compared to Hawarden High School, Connah's Quay High School and St David's High School, Saltney. Parents and carers are expressing their preference for other schools in a trend that has been established over many years.

The data around potential yield from future housing and projected pupil numbers has been intensively challenged both at pause and review stage for the previous capital proposed project and throughout the consultation period. On both occasions resilient evidence has not been found to support the governors' views. The final potential housing

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The data around potential yield from future housing and projected pupil numbers has been intensively challenged both at pause and review stage for the previous capital proposed capital project and throughout the consultation period. On both occasions resilient evidence has not been found to support the governors' views. The final potential housing yield numbers are likely to be well within the maximum as stated in the consultation document, and will be constructed over a number of years. Therefore, any new cohort of children eligible for admission will be low in number in the early years ahead. The Authority has used maximum yield numbers, which do not take into account existing school affiliations or parental preference for alternative schools.

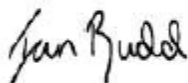
It is important that decision makers take a decision based on what will secure a resilient high quality education in the area. Estyn have now issued their report in relation to the proposed changes. They concluded that *"the County Council has a legal duty to look at the number and type of schools it has in Flintshire and is required to make sure that they meet the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. It is Estyn's opinion that the impact of the proposal will at least maintain the current standards of education in the area. The development of a post-16 learning hub will offer a wider range of both academic and vocational courses for learners and the closure of John Summers High School will not disadvantage unnecessarily any current pupils."*

We believe the proposals put forward are the best way to remove surplus places from our secondary portfolio, given the quality and proximity of other school provision. However, it is also important that the Council recognises the understandable anxieties of learners, parents and carers expressed through the consultation. The transition plans build on current joint curriculum delivery work at 14-16 with local schools (particularly at Connah's Quay High School), aligning the curriculum to provide resilience, continuity and the potential for an improved range of curriculum options than could otherwise be afforded. Individual transition plans and support for vulnerable learners will include pastoral support. Estyn have also assessed these plans as appropriate. One of the main themes of concern arising from consultation was transport to school for current learners. Cabinet could consider discretionary transport options in direct response to the concerns of the community.

Thank you for your support for the creation of the new purpose built sixth form centre to transform post-16 A level provision. Coleg Cambria, St David's High School, Connah's Quay High School, John Summers High School and Holywell High School are working well to improve learning opportunities within the area. We are confident that learner choice and learner outcomes will be improved by the change.

I have attached Estyn's official response to the consultation for your information. Please let me know if any additional information would be helpful.

Yours sincerely



Ian Budd
Chief Officer, Education & Youth