Dear cabinet member (s)

We write to express our concerns at your proposal to close Bellingham Middle School.

We have mixed feelings at the outcome of the consultation as it's great that you have decided to retain the small first schools and convert them to primary however we are unsure this is in the best interest of the children and the schools that were not financially viable. We both feel we may be in the same position in a couple of years as several of these schools are no longer sustainable.

We feel it would have been a better move to leave our catchment as 3 tier like you have with Hexham partnership. The social aspect of keeping these children in primary schools in small groups of 4,5,6 children is not good for them mixing with their piers, the middle school is a great stepping stone for children to move on from first school to grow their friendship groups and gain independence. Moving from a school of 50 to a school of 700 will be somewhat daunting for them.

As well as the social issues created by the closure of Bellingham Middle School your proposal will also impact the sustainability of our rural communities as families chose to move away from the area to be closer to education. As we are so rural you propose some of the children furthest out will be travelling for up to 3 hours per day, this will severely impact on the education of those children.

Our daughter recently made the move from first school to Bellingham Middle school and we have nothing but praise for the education and support she has received. Moving schools is a big step in a child's life and the teaching staff along with all other members of the team at Bellingham have been fantastic, she has gown over the last 6 months and part of this is down to the move and staff at the school. Her education has continued to thrive and she is doing well in all of her subjects.

We have seen in the papers and on social media how the council listened to the parents in the Hexham partnership and has given them what they want with the 3 tier system, we are obviously very disappointed and cannot therefore understand how you can't afford us parents the same curtosey especially with us being more rural and the impact on our children's travel time and general days being grater with the closure of our Middle School.

We ask that you reconsider your decision and listen to the voices from the north Tyne valley and keep Bellingham Middle School open.

Yours Faithfully.

Nigel and Kimberley Wright