Northumberland County Council

Jacqui Pearson <jacqui.pearson@northumberland.gov.uk>

Fwd: Objection to Closure of Bellingham Middle School

1 message

Sue Aviston <sue.aviston@northumberland.gov.uk> 6 June 2018 at 08:07
To: Education Consultations <educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>
Cc: Lorraine Fife <Lorraine.Fife@northumberland.gov.uk>, Jacqui Pearson <jacqui.pearson@northumberland.gov.uk>

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Andy Johnson GCSX** <andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk>
Date: Tuesday, 5 June 2018
Subject: Fwd: Objection to Closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: "Aviston, Sue" <Sue.Aviston@northumberland.gov.uk>

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: lauracharman1 <lauracharman1@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue, 5 Jun 2018, 22:15
Subject: Objection to Closure of Bellingham Middle School
To: <peter.jackson@northumberland.gov.uk>, <wayne.daley@northumberland.gov.uk>, <nick.oliver@northumberland.gov.uk>, <richard.wearmouth@northumberland.gov.uk>, <glen.sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk>, <john.riddle@northumberland.gov.uk>, <cath.homer@northumberland.gov.uk>, <veronica.jones@northumberland.gov.uk>, <scott.dickinson@northumberland.gov.uk>, <andy.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk>, <cath.mcevoy@northumberland.gov.uk>, <guy.opperman@northumberland.gov.uk>

Dear Northumberland County Council Member,

I am writing to alert you to the fact that myself, and my husband, are amongst many out here in the North Tyne and Redesdale Valleys, who strongly object to the closure of Bellingham Middle School!

I moved to Bellingham when I was 19 years old (I am now 37!) with the intention of being here for the remainder of my life, and raising my family here. I finally met my husband, who was at that time living in Corbridge, and persuaded him to move to Bellingham so we could give our future children the upbringing I had always dreamt of. Fast forward 5 years and I now have a 3 year old daughter whose educational future now looks exceptionally fragile and I am having to contemplate leaving the home,and village, that I love.

Bellingham Middle School is a wonderful, warm and friendly, transitional school, where the children are given the time and help required to nurture them as individuals, ready for

the move to high school and GCSEs. There are specialised classrooms for science, technology, I.T, etc, and teachers who have specialised subject knowledge. The class sizes enable children to learn and be supported without being lost in a sea of numbers. You could not ask for more caring teaching staff than those who work in Bellingham Middle School.

A large percentage of pupils who attend Bellingham Middle School currently walk to and from school, and have done so since they started their education on the same site, at Bellingham First School.
At the tender age of 11, children are not ready to be spending a minimum of 2 hours a day, but for some would be up to 4 hours a day, (depending on where in the outlying areas they are travelling from,) on buses to and from school. When are they expected to do homework? How do they access after school activities? When do they get time just to be with their families and friends to socialise? You will be robbing these poor children of two extra years of their lives with excessive travelling, just to access education they are entitled to!
Maybe you should come and take the journey on the school bus with the children to see for yourself how awful a journey it is!

Haydon Bridge High School is already in special measures which is already pushing parents to move their children into Hexham schools. To do this, if Bellingham Middle School closes, is going to mean children being swapped around schools like sweets in the playground!
Hexham middle schools are not going to be in favour of an influx of admissions half way through middle school (ready to start year 7) where the children have been removed from a two tier system to move back into a three tier system. And there will also be larger numbers of year 5 students looking for middle schools with spare places for them. Then this brings the issue of paying for transport to school if parents decide to send their child to school out of our catchment area in Hexham. The current bus for children to get to school in Hexham is the public service bus!

Speaking of school transport, if years 7 and 8 children have to travel along with years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, to Haydon Bridge by bus, that's an age range of EIGHT YEARS!!! Children as young as 11 being taken to school with young adults of up to 18 years old! The current school transport arrangements do not provide chaperones on buses with the children. Would this change?
What happens in the winter when the roads are impassable? That's more children missing out on days, and sometimes weeks, of their education!
I don't drive, and my husband works, so we wouldn't be able to get my daughter to or from school during periods when school transport was unavailable, or if she was attending any after school activities.
I am completely against my daughter, at 11 years old, travelling unaccompanied on a bus for two hours a day, with a bunch of 18 year olds!!!
Would you want that for your child???

Why do the families of Hexham take precedence over the families in the North Tyne and Redesdale Valleys??? Why are they allowed to keep their middle schools when we're not, when our middle school is so much more important in providing the most rural communities with the best education possible???
Basically, if you take away the education that everyone in Northumberland is used to, Bellingham, and the many surrounding villages, will all become retirement villages. The younger generations will all migrate away, the few amenities we have will decline, and there will be many fewer families moving into our already sparsely populated rural area.

Our Sure Start nursery North Tynies, and Bellingham First School (as a primary school if the plan goes ahead) will also suffer if fewer families with babies and younger children move into the area, or decide to leave altogether. Eventually the number of children left in the area will decline to the point where it will not be viable to have any sort of educational establishment in Bellingham.

The closing of Bellingham Middle School is most certainly not acting in the best interests of our children in this exceptionally rural, and very special, area of West Northumberland. The 'one size fits all' model used elsewhere in the county is just not appropriate for here!

All in all, this is not what the people of the North Tyne and Redesdale Valleys want for our already struggling economy or our children's precious education!!!

HANDS OFF OUR SCHOOL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Yours sincerely

Laura Charman

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

--
Sent from Gmail Mobile