

A petition was received containing 50 signatures.

Representations in the petition and LEA’s reponses

- That children have a right to be educated locally:

The Council supports the principles of community schools. However, the community has not chosen to use this school and it can no longer provide the quality of education to which local children are entitled. All local children can be educated within the city.

- That not enough consultation has been carried out in to the social effects of closure:

Young people who currently travel to another City School by choice benefit educationally and are included in a wider Brighton and Hove Society.

The local adult community makes little use of the facilities at the school.

Better School performance for all will have a stimulating and regenerative impact on the local community.

- We fully support the alternative proposals for the school as laid out by the Local Education Action Group:

The alternative proposals do not demonstrate that a viable, high quality secondary school could be provided on this site.

Letter Number	Comments made in letter	LEA’s Response
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the proposal to close Comart contradicts Council policy as set out in the recent publication “The Inclusive Council”. • That closing the secondary school in the area will undermine the regeneration programme • That the plan to close the school was made four years ago. 	<p>The Council plans to counter social exclusion in Brighton and Hove. The determination to secure high quality education for every child and young person is key to this policy. The Council has set out proposals for achieving this through the City’s secondary schools.</p> <p>The regeneration body has education and training targets for local young people. These are not being met by Comart. They can be more effectively met at other City schools based on recent performance.</p> <p>The City Council appointed a new head and invested in the school buildings. There was no intention to close the school.</p>
2	(please see above – same author)	
3	(please see above – same author)	
4	• That the school has suffered from	Decisions were made to treat the school

	<p>professional and political mistakes in recent years so the community deserves special treatment to compensate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the new building has not been handed over to the school so it is too early to say whether the investment will make a difference. • The Council may make a decision to close the school without the necessary financial information • Councillor Hawkes stated at a meeting of the School Forum Committee that the Council was considering a 'vocational option'...An officer of the Education Authority stated that it would cost £15,000,000 to buy out Jarvis from the PFI Contract. • The Council investigated a successful small school in Birmingham to which a local group had drawn their attention. • No good reason [for stating that a small school in East Brighton would not be viable] is given. • A well-run collegiate model is likely to increase the roll at Comart. • 'Progress ... is fragile'. The DfES had given the school, an award for 'substantial and rapid progress'. 	<p>and community as a special case and maintain a non-viable school to allow time for growth and improvement. The investment has failed to bring growth and improvement.</p> <p>All new build has been handed to the school. The Media Block was handed over on 31 May 2003. The managers of the school have made decisions about use.</p> <p>All the necessary financial information will be provided to Children, Families and Schools Sub-Committee and to Policy and Resources Committee before the proposal is put to the School Organisation Committee.</p> <p>Councillor Hawkes is not a member of the Schools Forum and therefore was not present at the Schools Forum meeting in January 2004. The PFI Project is not within the remit of the Schools Forum. No officer of the Education Authority has made any statement on the cost of a buy out. Many speculative figures have been quoted in the press.</p> <p>The Birmingham School was identified as a result of research commissioned by officers of the Council, as was the small secondary school in Wigan. All the schools identified by the local group were just starting, very rural or failing.</p> <p>A summary report appended to the December 1st CFS Report set out the reasons why the small secondary school in Birmingham was successful but the success could not be replicated in East Brighton.</p> <p>A collegiate model was considered as a way of sustaining a small school on the Wilson Avenue site. Research has shown no willingness on the part of parents who have chosen another school to place their child on this site.</p> <p>The DfES award recognised the schools' achievement in emerging from 'Special Measures' in February 2002. Since then,</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Expenditure could be minimised by utilising space within less popular schools. • As City Wide pupil numbers fall to a probable plateau in 2010.... • The PFI contract was modelled on a forecast of 850 pupils at the college in 2008 / 09. • It is unusual to give the need to broaden socialisation skills as a reason to close a neighbourhood school. • The LEA acknowledges that they are not certain how complete a picture they have [of parents' views]. • Thirty parents have chosen Comart for September 2004 • The LEA claims that they were unable to appoint a head teacher last spring. 	<p>examination performance and attendance had declined. The Autumn Term improvements are a tribute to the temporary leadership and management and the staff of the school.</p> <p>The financial risk matrix identifies risks and possible risk management strategies. The Council has set out a plan for dispersing students, if the school should close, which does not rely on this strategy. There is a combination of student and carer preference and course matching in this plan.</p> <p>The plateau is proposed as an alternative to a continuing fall. The Council's statisticians provide information on birth rates, net migration and transfer to the independent sector. The 2010 and beyond figures are therefore provisional.</p> <p>This assumed that places available at other City Schools would remain the same. Other schools have increased their pupil admission numbers to accommodate parent wishing to avoid Comart.</p> <p>It is not the reason for closing the school. It is a benefit to set against the acknowledged disbenefit of longer journeys to school.</p> <p>In the December 1st report to CFS Sub-Committee, officers outlined the steps taken to meet with parents, to inform through discussion or print media and the make a range of channel response available.</p> <p>Parents' reasons for choosing a school vary. Officers provided advice about the implications of choosing another school this year and being ineligible for home to school transport costs for the full five years of secondary education. This may have influenced some.</p> <p>It is not the policy of the LEA to disclose details of candidate" interviews. It can be confirmed that one candidate asked for a guarantee that the school would</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ofsted report on the LEA, in 2000, was critical of the LEA's support prior to and in the initial phases of the Fresh Start Programme. 	<p>not be closed. No such guarantee was or would be given. Candidates had been given full and proper information about the school's current performance and prospects.</p> <p>All heads are offered and given full support.</p> <p>The Acting Head at the time was Mrs. J. Pick, now in Hackney. The Acting Deputies were Ms. J. Simpson, seconded from a secondary school in Croydon and Mr. DeFoe, deputy head designate from September 2003 at Ringmer Community College.</p> <p>The LEA has since provided continuous financial and advisory support to the school. The vision of "a learning community with schools at its heart" will be realised for the East Brighton area through the primary schools in the immediate locality and the secondary schools across the city.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2005 could see the best over GCSE results at the College. It should be given a few more years to see if it can succeed. 	<p>The optimistic projections being made on GCSE results 2005 are based on progress in the courses taught at Varndean Schools.</p> <p>The Authority can not sustain these arrangements over time and would not contemplate more years of progressive decline.</p>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School has served my older children well and I wish to send my younger children there to benefit from the same education. I do not want to send my Children on buses when there is a school within walking distance. 	<p>The school has served many pupils well. The decline in numbers of pupils means that it will be impossible to provide the breadth and high quality of education in the future.</p> <p>If it is not possible to maintain a viable school on this site, a bus journey becomes inevitable. It is one of the issues which has concerned officers and Members throughout consultation. It is felt that the travel disadvantage will be outweighed by the educational quality gain.</p>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial consultation period was limited. 	<p>The start of a review was announced on May 22nd 2003. Formative Consultation took place during September and October 2003. The final document fully reflected the views of those who had participated in consultation and / or</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A period of stability should be sought to allow the school to build on improvement. • The work done by the Local Education Action Group... has been totally ignored in the final report. • The alternative proposal for a new community school has not been considered in detail. • ...parents will have to fund travel costs for younger siblings... • [If] parents have to drive their kids to school, there will be additional congestion and pollution. • You are condemning these kids to other schools, which are already less well regarded... • There has been the minimum consultation period allowed by law. 	<p>responded by letter, voicemail and email. Meetings were held with any individual or group who wished to present their views.</p> <p>The School emerged from 'Special Measures' in February 2002. Since then, the head has taken early retirement and the GCSE results have fallen further. Had Ofsted inspected as planned in February / March 2004, it is possible that they would have placed it under 'Special Measures' again, on recent performance.</p> <p>The views of the local Education Action Group and their proposed alternative options have been fully taken into account and conveyed to Members. Officers commissioned the survey of student views through the Youth Service.</p> <p>Officers have conducted national research for models of good practice in similar circumstances, have modelled alternative staffing and curriculum delivery structures and investigated every example given to them by any group.</p> <p>This is incorrect. Any child who lives more than three miles from the nearest available school will, under current policy, have their home to school transport paid.</p> <p>In line with City Council policy, every encouragement will be given to use buses, not cars. Bus Passes, see above, will be a major incentive.</p> <p>Officers have been discussing with Secondary heads how the existing students would be dispersed across a number of schools, if Comart were to close and how the Admissions process would be managed in subsequent years to ensure equality of access for East Brighton children.</p> <p>There was extensive formative consultation before the statutory</p>
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		process commenced. It is not in the interests of young people to extend the period of uncertainty.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effort has been made to consult parents, other than through written material. 	Ten meetings were held at school venues to enable parents to question officers on a one to one basis. Officers recorded comments on their behalf, if necessary. A voicemail facility was set up for people who preferred not to write. Officers attended meetings called by local organisations to talk about the issues.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMCI has stated that schools in deprived areas should be kept open. Comart is the only consistent safe thing in some young people's lives and its closure would cost more in emotional well being than the cost of keeping it open. The initial consultation period was limited and the final paper did not reflect the views of a large proportion of people in Education or at Comart. A period of stability should be sought to allow the school to build on improvements. A model for a new community school has been presented and could be made to work if studied in detail. The work done by the Local Education Action Group has been ignored. 	<p>This is one argument in a longer paper. David Bell acknowledges that there are times when a Local Authority must grasp the nettle of closure.</p> <p>For many young people, school provides a stable point in a disrupted life. All the City Schools provide support and counselling for young people. There will be additional support for young people making the transition to another school, if Comart were to close.</p> <p>The start if a review was announced on May 22nd 2003. Please see response 7.</p> <p>Please see response 7.</p> <p>Please see response 7.</p> <p>Please see response 7.</p>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In one of the most deprived areas in the country, parents would not be able to afford the bus fare to another school. What is to attract people to live here if there is no local school? The school has recently been 	<p>East Brighton students who live more than three miles from the nearest secondary school will have their fares to school paid.</p> <p>Parents and Children will have access to other City schools and to a good secondary education.</p>

	<p>improving and so should not be shut.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new facilities to improve the school are not in use. 	<p>The school came out of Special Measures in 2002 but recorded a 5% drop in GCSE results between 2002 and 2003. If inspected now, there is a risk that it would be returned to Special Measures.</p> <p>The new buildings have been handed over to the school but because of declining number and resources, the school can not staff them to use them.</p>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in my family have done well at Comart and those there are thriving and do not wish to move to another school. My son feels intimidated when he is out of the area and I do not wish him to have to travel. 	<p>Comart has served many young people well. Declining numbers and resources make it impossible to guarantee to future quality of education.</p> <p>If the school closes, Comart students will move with a group of people they know. Special support arrangements will be put in place to make a smooth social and educational transition.</p>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be a school in the area and closure would increase truancy. The school, could be downsized and its surplus space out to other uses. The school could have a sixth form. 	<p>If enough people in the community used the school for their children, a school would continue. Falling rolls will make it non-viable. Extra arrangements to ensure attendance will be put in place if the school closes.</p> <p>A smaller secondary school could not provide a proper curriculum. There is insufficient numbers to justify a Sixth Form; the Learning and Skills Council makes this decision.</p>
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would find it difficult to persuade my children to change to a new school. I am worried about the effect it will have on my child's education. It is my right to have my child educated locally. Not enough consultation has taken place. 	<p>If Comart closes, parents, teachers and support staff will work together to make the transition to a new school as smooth as possible. There will be induction arrangements to overcome understandable fears.</p> <p>The Council will secure a high quality education at another school and to everything possible to reduce disruption.</p> <p>The preference for a local school does not override the Authority's responsibility to provide efficient and effective education. This has not proved possible at Comart.</p> <p>Please see response 7.</p>

14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a parent I have not been consulted properly. 	<p>Since the review was announced in May 2003, there have been meetings at the school and in other schools, and in community organisations. There have been leaflets, letters and different ways to respond – letter, emails and voicemail.</p>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see letter 14 	Please see response 14
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer opposed to closure – no reason given 	Opposition noted.
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough consultation The deficits arise from the PFI project. Where will the Council find the £15m to buy out Jarvis; it would be better used to support the deficit? 	<p>Please see response 14</p> <p>The deficits arise mainly from the costs of staffing. Not enough pupils choose Comart to provide the necessary budget.</p> <p>This figure has no basis in fact.</p>
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see letter 13 	Please see response 13
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has served my family well. The cost of bus fares is something you will not have to find. 	<p>The school has served many pupils well. Falling numbers make it difficult to maintain that service.</p> <p>All pupils living more than three miles from their nearest school have home to school transport paid for.</p>
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I shall not be able to reach a more distant school if my son has problems. 	Schools who need to see a parent can make arrangements that meet the family circumstances.
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see letter 13 	Please see response 13
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My child has a right to be educated locally. Parents and pupils have not been listened to. 	<p>Please see response to the petition</p> <p>There have been many opportunities for views to be put over the past six months. All views have been taken in to account in drafting the reports.</p>
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To force children from a deprived area to travel outside the area is appalling. Parents will have further to travel to attend parent's evenings. 	<p>Children will benefit from consistent high quality education. More than half the secondary age children in that area choose to travel for this reason. School uniforms are similar to that of Comart across the City. Pupils living more than three miles from the school will have their fares paid. Free school meal entitlement will remain the same.</p> <p>As part of the transition programme, officers will discuss how parents who currently choose another school ensure that they can attend school events. Improving on current levels of parent participation at Comart events will be a</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact will the closure have on local Primary Schools? • There will need to be extra buses with a negative impact on the environment. • Consider the alternative proposed by the Local action group. 	<p>target for the transition programme, if the school closes.</p> <p>There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some parents avoid the local primary school because the natural secondary progression route is to Comart. The LEA is fully committed to working with the local primary schools to improve performance and to secure a smooth transition to suitable secondary schools on in the City.</p> <p>To accommodate the pupils who will need to travel, there may need to be one extra bus during peak hours.</p> <p>These have already been fully considered and discussed in previous reports.</p>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be very difficult to get all the children in a large family ready to travel to a more distant school. • If a child is taken ill at school, it is better to be within walking distance of home. • The cost of transport will be excessive • Truancy will increase • My child is upset at the prospect of changing school. 	<p>Organising children to leave for school in good time is always a large task. The sibling link in our admissions arrangements should mean that they all attend the same secondary school.</p> <p>All schools will make arrangements for contacting parents and if necessary, arranging for them to reach home.</p> <p>Any child living more than three miles from their nearest secondary school will be entitled to free home to school transport.</p> <p>The causes of truancy are more complicated than distance to travel issues. Cost of home to school transport will not be a barrier.</p> <p>Every measure will be put in place to ensure a smooth transition to a new secondary school</p>
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My daughter's travel to school time would be greatly increased and would put her in personal danger. • My daughter's journey will make her more likely to suffer illness. • My daughter may suffer from bullying in another school and fail 	<p>Travel to school time will be increased. Many pupils make similar journeys to school quite safely. All schools have travel plans and provide safety training for pupils.</p> <p>All schools have arrangements for dealing with pupils who arrive wet or cold.</p> <p>All schools have arrangements for</p>

	<p>to make educational progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be increased truancy • Why have you not considered other ways of keeping the school open? • Why not close another school instead of Comart? 	<p>pastoral support. Special arrangements will be made to ensure that pupils transferring from Comart are fully supported to ensure that they settle and progress.</p> <p>Please see response 24</p> <p>All other options have been fully explored but none have proved to be viable.</p> <p>Parents have clearly expressed a preference for other schools and it is government policy to meet parental preference where possible.</p>
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My child is well served by Comart and she and her brother do not wish to attend another school. • I would like to know the real reason for the Closure. 	<p>The LEA and the DfES have provided grants to ensure that the current Comart students get a good education but these grants will not continue. The longer journeys which young people will have to make are justified by the long term quality of education which can be provided elsewhere.</p> <p>The proposal to close the school is entirely based on educational considerations.</p>
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations were arranged to prevent working parents from attending. • There will not be enough places to accommodate Comart students. • How will the PFI contract be financed? • Performance is improving not deteriorating. • The small school options should be examined thoroughly. 	<p>Meetings were held at 6.00pm at Comart, during the afternoon at Primary Schools and from 6-8 and 7-9 at secondary schools</p> <p>Demographic projections show the secondary population falling and enough places across the city to accommodate all students.</p> <p>If the school closes, the City Council has plans to meet the cost of varying the PFI contract. Educational considerations are paramount.</p> <p>The GCSE results declined in 2003 from 17% A* - C to 12% A*-C GCSE. The KS3 result have shown no improvement</p> <p>The small school option has been researched exhaustively.</p>
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As letter 13 	<p>Please see response 13</p>
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school serves pupils well. 	<p>Please see response 6</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is now making improvements and has a balanced budget. • Extensive research should be carried out on the social consequences of closure. • Where could Comart pupils go? • What arrangements are being made to avoid bullying? • What will happen to children with Special Needs? • Truancy will increase • What will happen to teachers? • How can a PFI school be closed? 	<p>The school emerged from 'Special Measures' but examination performance has subsequently deteriorated. The budget is not balanced, it is underpinned by time limited grants and the write-off of deficits.</p> <p>No research is possible before closure. It is possible to speculate based on the experience of other areas. There is insufficient evidence that subsidising a poorly performing school contributes to community regeneration.</p> <p>Secondary Schools have been consulted about further placements arrangements. Current pupils will be placed according to needs and preference. The sibling rule will apply to the admission of younger children.</p> <p>Induction programmes will be arranged to secure a smooth transition. This will include further work on socialisation. The City has an active co-ordinated anti-bullying programme.</p> <p>Every child with an identified special need will have an individual education plan, reviewed with his/her new school.</p> <p>Additional measure to secure good attendance will be put in place if the school closes.</p> <p>The HR team will work with all staff to ensure that those who wish to continue to work in education in the city are able to do so.</p> <p>It is possible to negotiate the exit of one school from a PFI contract, if it is decided to close the school.</p>
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area will not attract families if there is no secondary school. • There will be a devastating effect on local primary schools. 	<p>Comart has not attracted more than half the student population in the community. The objectives of the regeneration body can be better achieved if all resident students attend successful and high performing schools.</p> <p>Many local residents currently avoid local primary schools because they believe they would have to use Comart</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children bussed to other schools may struggle socially and educationally and truancy may rise with consequences for community safety. • Business and enterprise will not be attracted to East Brighton because there will be no lead workforce to tap in to. • Specialisms are a factor on school choice • Performance is improving under the temporary management team and there is no question mark over the future from Ofsted. • The alternative small school option would work. • Pupils want the school to stay open • Is the proposal made to enable the Council to sell off the land and buildings. The cost of leaving the PFI contract will be very high. 	<p>as the secondary destination. The Authority is committed to supporting the local primary schools and ensuring that pupils have high quality secondary education available.</p> <p>Pupils who currently attend other schools across the City are able to settle and thrive. Additional steps will be taken to secure good attendance and support pupils in their new school. The social networks in the estate can be reinforced by providing suitable activities in the community and contacting young people through their schools.</p> <p>Businesses do not recruit school children. They will have a resident workforce which is better qualified and trained as students succeed in other schools.</p> <p>All secondary schools offer a full curriculum regardless of specialism. There is a City wide initiative in the 14-19 phase to ensure that more and better vocational courses are offered.</p> <p>The examination performance and overall attendance raise serious questions about the school's current and future performance and there is a genuine possibility that the school would be deemed to have serious weaknesses.</p> <p>Extensive research and modelling has demonstrated that a small secondary school in Brighton would not be viable or able to provide an appropriate education.</p> <p>It is understandable that current pupils prefer the known to the unknown. There is no evidence that the school could attract a rising number of pupils in the future.</p> <p>The Council has no plan to dispose of the site. The arguments for closure are based solely on educational grounds, and see response 29.</p>
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial consultation period limited 	The review of the future of the school

	<p>and the report did not accurately reflect local views. Youth workers were not consulted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A period of stability is needed now. • The student's views have been ignored. • The LEA's stance implies that the failure of the school is the fault of staff, students and community. • There should be more time to consult 	<p>was announced 22nd May 2003. All views were reported to Committee in December 2003. Youth Workers have received the same invitation to express their views as have all stakeholders across the City.</p> <p>The school is demonstrably in decline and while recent management changes have greatly improved the situation, these are fragile.</p> <p>The student consultation has been reported to Members and their views taken in to account. Their understandable anxieties about change are being carefully considered in planning for transition.</p> <p>The LEA has made clear that the staff have served many students well. The law on parental preference has led to the half of the community preferring another school to achieve their choice, causing rolls to fall. All the attempts to change the image of the school and improve its facilities have failed to reverse that fall. The LEA acknowledges this.</p> <p>The school has been the subject of discussion, formative consultation and statutory consultation for six months.</p>
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be long term social costs to the City and to Whitehawk. • EB4U were insufficiently involved. • The PFI is crippling the school. 	<p>The impact of travel to another City school would be outweighed by the benefits of improved educational performance, greater participation in training and higher education and greater inclusion in the wider life of the City. Education is at the heart of a learning city.</p> <p>A regeneration body can not devote its funding to mainstream expenditure. The issue has been the long term viability of the school based on core and sustainable funding.</p> <p>The annual unitary charges is related to the amount the school would have to pay to obtain facilities services and lifecycle maintenance by a traditional procurement route. The gap between the charge for the notional and real role</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council should publicise its plans for the future of the site. • Concern that there may be bullying if pupils transfer to another school • This decision should be deferred until after the review of admissions criteria is complete. • There should be a working group to consider alternatives to closure. • People were invited to offer options without sufficient financial information. • David Blunkett has stated that “education policy [should be] co-ordinated with wider government strategies for regenerating communities and tackling generational inequality”. 	<p>is bridged by Council subsidy.</p> <p>Until a decision is taken by the SOC, there can be no plan for the site. Preliminary estimates of its value and possible alternative use will be presented to the Policy and Resources in due course. The Committee will consider the financial impact of the decision to close the school before the proposal is sent to the SOC</p> <p>Careful plans to support pupil transition are being made, if the school closes. There is a City Wide anti-bullying strategy and the pupil transfer will receive particular attention.</p> <p>The review is complete and proposals will be discussed at the next Admissions Forum.</p> <p>All the potential participants have had an opportunity to contribute to the recent consultation. A range of options has already been explored</p> <p>Complete financial models were produced and provided to those interested in proposing options. Extended explanation in meetings with officers was provided to those who requested it.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the statement is not matched by policies and legislative frameworks which allow this to happen. Recent regulation has reinforced the rights of parents to a place in a popular school, thus accelerating the decline of less popular schools.</p>
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