

January 2010

Dear Parent/Carer

You may be aware from recent press releases that there are some local concerns about the proposed relocation of Ilkley Grammar School onto the site of Wheatley Lane opposite our playing fields. We would not have chosen a Green Belt site as a preferred option if there had been another alternative: there was not. This is the only site in Ilkley owned by the council; they could not afford to purchase another. We cannot expand or rebuild on our present site: the initial Options Appraisals this time last year made that very clear.

We are looking for your support at this critical time for your child and for the future children of the Wharfe Valley, and for these important reasons:

- ❑ to ensure Addingham children access to their local school. Two years ago eleven families were not admitted when school places were allocated. They did finally gain entry on appeal, but the uncertainty remains year on year. We have only 53 children from outside the Wharfe Valley from Silsden and Keighley, so growing our capacity is simply to protect places for Wharfe Valley children.
- ❑ to meet the government's 14-19 agenda, with all young people staying in education and training until 18. We currently only take around 60% of our Year 11 students into Post-16 despite 80% of them achieving 5+ A\*-C at GCSE: we need to be able to take more, but do not have the accommodation – classroom, study, social or dining.
- ❑ to raise attainment further. We need to develop our curriculum to meet student need in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and we need to transform learning and learning spaces to do this. Our classrooms are small and inflexible; we have insufficient space to extend and develop curriculum provision.
- ❑ to be DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant. Our students in wheelchairs cannot access all of our buildings; they also have to go out onto Cowpasture Road to move between the two main buildings – a long way round, and one exposing them to all weathers.
- ❑ to bring us onto one site: having split site playing fields is expensive and limits our students' easy access to facilities, particularly at lunchtime and after school.
- ❑ to have state of the art facilities for students, but also for our community. We will offer theatre and concert space, sports spaces and pitches, music rooms and a large ICT/learning resource area. We already have very close working partnerships with Ben Rhydding Sports Club and Ilkley Rugby Club amongst others, and we are exploring others.
- ❑ to ensure environmental sustainability. Our present site has coal-fired boilers and inefficient heating that is not zoned. A new build would be BREAM rated and entirely sustainable.
- ❑ to allow for safe transport access. The ten buses that currently service us collect students on Cowpasture Road and Wheatley Road; congestion is considerable; crossing for students is risky. The new school will have an on-site bus drop off and collection area; cars and taxis will also come onto site and off the main roads.
- ❑ to allow students proper social, play and catering facilities. Currently we have insufficient space to keep Years 10 and 11 and Post-16 on site over lunchtime; so 500 students go down town at lunchtimes. Students would stay on site in the new build and be much more healthily fed and better prepared for afternoon learning.

- ❑ to ensure a secure and safe site. The new site will be fenced and secure; the current one is almost impossible to secure, with four site entrances, five separate blocks and numerous doors. Costs are prohibitive in terms of fencing, keypads and safety.

Bradford does not readily invest heavily in the Wharfe Valley, and there are only three new builds in the final phase of 21 schools. Ilkley Grammar School is very, very fortunate to have been chosen as one of these – because of the severe constraints of our site, and because of the huge difficulties of rebuilding on it and decanting almost 1600 students (and protecting their education) for up to 18 months.

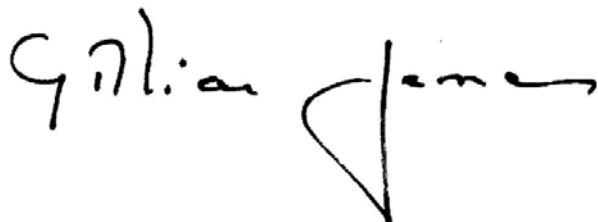
If we do not secure this £30 million investment, we will get nothing. There is no plan B – there cannot be with no alternative site and no potential for rebuild on our own. We cannot afford for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be jeopardised – for our children's sake.

We are here for our students: children first. Please allow us to seize this new site for them, whatever the concerns. If you can show your support, too, by attending the Ilkley Parish Council public planning consultation meeting at the Clarke Foley Centre at 7.30pm on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February, then please join us.

We recognise change is hard, that the site option is not ideal; that there are considerable ties with our present site – its 1893 frontage, the fact that many of you, and many of your own parents, were educated here. But we have to look to the future and to what learning and educational chances are about in 2010. Our children deserve the very best: this is a fantastic one-off chance to realise this. The initial plans demonstrate our commitment, with our architects, to keeping the site open and an attractive 'gateway to Ilkley'. The building is stepped into the slope, and the playing fields are adjacent to the road so the open perspective is retained.

We will maintain close contact with you over the coming weeks. Please look at our website for regular updates, and for our interactive Question and Answer section. Ask us, too, the questions you want answered, raise any concerns and post your support. And contact me directly, if you wish; I do not want this issue to divide our community: I do not want it to be about sides or 'Battle lines' as the Gazette headlined it. We need to work together in the best interests of our school and its community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G' and a long, sweeping tail on the 's'.

Mrs Gillian James  
Headteacher