

YOUR CHANCE TO SAY

**NO**

TO THE CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE

AT VALE SCHOOL IN

FINDON VALLEY

This Public Meeting Notice is issued by the  
Findon Valley Residents' Association  
through David Goncalves, FVRA Chairman,  
and Maggie Winter, FVRA Planning Officer.

Join our protest at Vale School starting from

**Tuesday, 18 August from 8.00am**

to prevent the commencement of planned work.

Come by car and bring your own banners to voice your views!

Please contact Maggie Winter on 01903 263 038

**[www.findonvalley.org](http://www.findonvalley.org)**

## THE FACTS

On 22 June Tony Lovatt and Kevin Jenkins, from Vale School, wrote to parents explaining the financial benefits they will receive by accepting a Children & Family Centre (C&FC) to be built on the school premises.

At the Public Meeting, organised by Findon Valley Residents' Association, Tony Lovatt was asked whether he would withdraw his support as it is clear that there's considerable opposition from both local residents and parents alike and the view that Vale School was an inappropriate site. Tony Lovatt agreed to refer the views back to the board, however local opinion was ignored and the board continued their support of the C&FC development.

At the same meeting, when asked about the financial benefits to the school for accepting the proposal, Peter Prowdly (Capita Development) confirmed that "the benefits to the school in terms of improvement were not associated with the project" and that "funding was not in jeopardy." This was also confirmed by Pat Arculus (Cabinet Member, Children's and Young People's Services).

Following our local MP Tim Loughton's press release (see opposite) issued to the local papers, Pat Arculus replies: "Mr Loughton accused West Sussex County Council of arrogance and incompetence, and 'bulldozing' proposals through. This is quite untrue and it is equally unfair to suggest this is to allow the school to gain some financial benefits." However for reasons unknown to us, this statement was not included in the final press release...

## OUR CASE

The building of the C&FC must not start because:

- of the impact it will cause on increased local road congestion
- the discontent of the local residents within the vicinity on more parked vehicles
- the concerns of parents with other visitors on school premises during class time
- the improvements are clearly not dependent on Vale School
- the intensity of the opposition of those living in the Valley and further afield

It is quite clear that we need to stop the building work commencing as once the equipment and materials are in for Vale School improvements there would be no way of stopping the build of the Council-approved Children & Family Centre.

By halting the building work to start at the cost of school improvements, we can hope to get Vale School to withdraw their support for the C&FC. It has already been said and written by different people that the two are not dependent on each other.

## PRESS RELEASE FROM TIM LOUGHTON MP

East Worthing MP Tim Loughton joined members of the Findon Valley Residents' Association and local councillors at a 'council of war' meeting this week pledging to step up the campaign against siting a family and children centre in the grounds of the Vale School in Findon Valley. This follows a decision by West Sussex County Council to go ahead with the centre in the teeth of overwhelming objections from local residents and parents at the school. Work is due to start on refurbishments to the school itself during the school holidays, followed by the filling in of the swimming pool and construction of the new centre later in the autumn.

Tim Loughton commented:

"After West Sussex Council's planning committee voted themselves planning permission for the centre I accused the Council of breathtaking incompetence in the way they had handled this whole affair. I was wrong. It was breathtaking incompetence borne out of incredible arrogance with the way that County Hall has completely stuck two fingers up at my constituents and almost literally bulldozed this proposal through. It is just this sort of disregard for the wishes of local people that gives politics a bad name and makes politicians look out of touch. I am relieved to say that we do things differently in my constituency and my constituents expect, and are entitled to, better.

To recap this whole process started with the County Council inviting a select band of stakeholders to a non-existent venue for a consultation meeting back in February. They kept it secret from the ward councillors, from the Findon Valley Residents' Association and from me. When people found out about it they were rightly annoyed given the serious congestion problems in the area already and the lack of information about what was involved and the impact it would have on an already crowded school. The Vale School and County Council then hurriedly held a public meeting at which everyone in attendance had their concerns confirmed. The school were only in favour of the proposal because it would give them extra cash to fill in their swimming pool which in any case had been dug by local volunteers. The County Council assured everyone they had done their homework.

At a second public meeting which I chaired over 150 people put questions to County Councillors and officers which remain unanswered. No proper research has been done as to the need for the children's centre on this site, no traffic research has been done, no calculations of how many people will use it and for what purpose. The County Council promised at that meeting to go away and look thoroughly into alternative sites, particularly the Lime Tree Surgery where GPs are prepared to offer space. In the meantime over 260 residents sent individual letters of objection to the County Council against only 2 in favour despite the school having urged parents to write in support. Over 200 parents at the school signed a petition against the children's centre. So the County Council then wrote to everyone to say that the building will go ahead anyway and offered no explanation. We now hear that they have not even bothered to talk to the Lime Tree surgery since the public meeting. This is no way to run a wheel stall let alone a children's services department which has already been the subject of damning criticism from OFSTED resulting in staff from the DCSF having been sent in.

The tragedy is that most of us fully support the children's centre programme but there are clearly overriding reasons why this is the wrong place. The result will now be to drive a wedge between the school and the local community and undermine support for children's centres elsewhere. I have written to the Secretary of State Ed Balls expressing my concerns and we will not be taking this decision lying down. Together with residents and the ward councillors we will be stepping up our campaign and the County Council should be in no doubt that they have messed up big time here."

Tim Loughton MP