

PRESS RELEASE - Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign

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WILL SCHOOL CONSULTATION BE GENUINE?

Richmond Council decided at their last meeting to carry out a Borough-wide consultation on any proposal that the church puts forward for Catholic secondary school, "including on the use of the Clifden [Road] site." At the same time they made clear their desire to see a Catholic secondary go ahead.

Richmond Inclusive Schools Campaign spokesman, Jeremy Rodell, said "We welcome the commitment to a borough-wide consultation run by the Council. And we appreciate the LibDem opposition's action in proposing a consultation in the first place. But we have two concerns. Firstly that the Council will use wording that makes it look as if the only realistic option involves a Catholic Voluntary Aided school at Clifden Road. And secondly that comments made by Lord True and others in the Council debate suggest that, whatever the result, the Council will go ahead with their original plan anyway, on the basis of protecting "minority interests".

Many people in the borough think that using the only available site for a Voluntary Aided Catholic secondary school is not so much about protecting minority interests as about granting one special interest group – Catholics who want exclusive schooling - a privilege unavailable to anyone else. That's especially true when the school would be additional to all the existing Catholic VA secondaries in the area. And, like the others, have all its running costs paid by the taxpayer but effectively be closed to 90% of the borough's children whose parents are not Catholics.

There's a simple test for whether or not the consultation is genuine. Can the Council say what realistic result would lead them to decide not to go ahead with a Catholic Voluntary Aided school on the Clifden Road site? If they can't do that, even without firm numbers, and the only outcome they will ever accept is a Catholic VA school on the site, then the consultation will be a sham.

But we hope and expect it will be genuine. Their election manifesto accused the previous LibDem Council of repeatedly going through "*the pretence of 'consultation' but always with its mind made up.*" They know that the electorate will not forgive them if they do the same thing."

Notes to editors:

1. Full text of the motion passed by the Council on 1st November 2011: *"This Council resolves bearing in mind its commitment to respect equal opportunities and the places of minorities in our community, to maintain its longstanding commitment to the provision of a Roman Catholic secondary school, reaffirmed under successive administrations and, as agreed without opposition by this full Council in its Corporate Plan adopted in April 2011; and to ensure, in accordance with its normal practice, Borough-wide consultation on any proposal that comes forward for such a school, including on the use of the Clifden site."*
2. Conservative council election manifesto available here (see Section 8):
[http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Conservative_manifesto - R&T PUTTINGLOCALPEOPLEFIRST 19.4.10.doc](http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Conservative_manifesto_-_R&T_PUTTINGLOCALPEOPLEFIRST_19.4.10.doc)
3. Map showing nearby Catholic secondaries and borough schools
[http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Schools_map - summary - update with Clifden Road.pdf](http://www.richmondinclusiveschools.org.uk/files/view/other-useful-documents/Schools_map_-_summary_-_update_with_Clifden_Road.pdf)
4. For more information, email home@jrodell.com or call Jeremy Rodell on 07798 935569.

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