

A Statement By Councillor Phil Herbert

Cabinet St Luke's School transfer 14.12.10

I am vice-chairman of Duston Parish Council and wish to explain to you the role and concerns of the Parish Council in the attempt to acquire the redundant St Luke's School site .

First, it recognises this prominent site itself is unique and significant as it incorporates not only Victorian and 1960s buildings but a large spinney with rare yew trees and a playing field.

Secondly, it is aware that Old Duston is increasing in size very rapidly with development on the British Timken site, Millway school playing field and the adjacent Princess Marina site. Existing community facilities will be inadequate for the projected increase in population.

Thirdly, I feel the Parish Council has a responsibility to preserve important historic features for future generations; particularly, as in this case, when residents know the school was given to the village in 1856 and are vociferous in demanding its retention for the Community.

Fourthly, although the financial obligation is large, the actual cost to each elector will be less than 3p per week which is minimal In relation to the benefits accrued for the residents of Duston

Finally, together with the Duston Sports and Leisure Complex the Council is supporting a framework of community facilities from which future generations will benefit. I feel this is a legitimate role of the Parish Council, and all parish Councils, which should be encouraged.

Thank you.

A Statement By Councillor Matthew Golby

Cabinet 14/12/2010

The St. Luke's School Land & Building

Although I am away, I wanted to make sure that I make a few comments to you about the St Luke's School item on your agenda today.

To me and many other residents of Duston, the old school building is one of the most important and iconic buildings in our village. Anyone on entering our village, cannot fail to notice the fine Victorian red-brick school building that has stood, in perpetuity, while the rest of the village has been enveloped by the sprawling growth of Northampton.

Duston Parish Council, and in particular Mrs Margaret Edwards who is here today, have been working on this project with NCC for a number of years now. For your information, the vision of the project is to turn the old school land and buildings in to a community hub, that will provide vital community facilities as well as base for a number of small businesses to operate from.

The momentum of the project has ebbed and flowed throughout the years, but the will and application of Mrs Edwards in my opinion, has been unfaltering and worthy of recognition. I share the opinion of many of my colleagues on Duston Parish Council, that the St Luke's School project is indeed ambitious. And it will take a dedicated body of volunteers and interested parties to firstly get the project off the ground and then to sustain and manage the centre. In effect, this project in its entirety defined, "big society" before it was muted by our new government.

To me however, the project is ground-breaking and is well worth the effort. It will breathe new life into a much loved village asset, an asset that will in turn breathe new life into our community. I would like to thank the officers and members of NCC's asset management department who have had input into the St Luke's project, for their patience, perseverance and assistance.

All that remains is to urge you, the cabinet to approve the report to transfer the lease to Duston Parish Council which will allow this project to finally get off the ground.

Thank you for listening.

Councillor Matthew Golby – New Duston

A Statement By Councillor Margaret Edwards

Cabinet; transfer of St Luke's.

14th December 2010.

I am Margaret Edwards, a member of Duston Parish Council and lead the St Luke's Centre Project.

4 years ago in September 2006, I stood in this room and told the assembled people a story, as well as asking them to exclude the St Luke's site from the package of school sites being offered for sale.

The story detailed the history of St Luke's school and the playing field; how it was given to the church by Lord Palmerston for the poor of Duston in 1856: its importance as the central point of the Conservation area and gateway to the village: and in particular its relevance for today as a possible new meeting point and work place for the expanding village of Duston.

Now I feel that possibility has a chance to be realised. I am sure there are many pitfalls to be overcome, problems to be encountered and risks to be faced. But I am also certain, with support of Duston residents, the backing of the Parish Council and your good will it can be a successful venture.

I would like to thank all present, in anticipation of a successful outcome, for their trust in our proposals and I promise you we will do our best not to let you down, if you give us this chance.

Please don't make us wait another 4 years.

M Edwards

6th December 2010.

A Statement By Councillor David Huffadine-Smith

**Statement to Northants CC Cabinet 14 Dec 2010
Item D2 St Luke's School Duston**

Chairman, Councillors, Officers of the Council, Ladies & Gentlemen

First, I would like to make it clear that although I am an elected member of Duston Parish Council, and a former Churchwarden of St Luke's Church, Duston, I speak in a private capacity, and the following views are entirely my own.

Next, may I thank the Chairman for exercising his discretion in order to allow me to speak.

I have here a transcript of a conveyance dated 7 December 1857, which conveys, "*freely and voluntarily and without valuable consideration*", the parcel of land upon which the St Luke's School was built, and which was enrolled in Chancery on the 16 December 1857, so that was just 9 days between exchange of contract and completion.

The document provides for the erection of buildings to be used as a school for the education of children and adults of the labouring, manufacturing or other poorer classes in the Parish of Duston, and since that time, the school building itself has become an iconic landmark building in the conservation area as you enter Duston old village from Northampton.

The land and buildings were given over to be controlled by the "*principal officiating minister, his licensed curate(s), the churchwardens and five other persons*", and the document also makes provision for replacement persons to be elected.

Nowadays this would mean the Rector of the Team ministry, and indeed the Vicar of Duston is a member of the working party, and the elected other persons could be interpreted as Parish Councillors, of which there are four on the working party. So that historic link is being maintained.

Over the years there has been a steady development of the school site, with the addition of playing fields and later buildings, and even before the school transferred to its new site on the St Crispin's development in the parish of Upton, there was a tremendous groundswell of public opinion that the St Luke's school site should adapted to become a community centre.

And so the working party was set up, and whilst so many special purpose groups often despair and fall away in the face of difficulties, to its credit the St Luke's working party has maintained its numbers, and its enthusiasm, through the many long years of negotiation and planning.

Whilst the discussion with Barrett's proved fruitless when the original arrangements for the disposal of surplus schools sites was abandoned, that time enabled the working party to fully develop its business plan, which includes provision for a privately run nursery school, and submit it for external scrutiny and comment in order to prove its viability.

Returning to the little bit of archive history, the document even provides a mechanism for arbitration between the Church overseers and the Parish overseers, should the need arise, and of course any agreements between the County Council and the Parish Council, or between the Parish Council and the Community Interest Company, will likewise have conditions and arrangements for settlement of any issues that might arise, thus protecting everyone's interests.

Earlier this year, the County Council signed a Partnership Agreement with NCALC, which is the countywide association for Parish Councils, and of which the Chief Executive of the County Council is President, and Officer Report D2 represents a significant step in the direction of enabling "the Big Society" and "Localism" to be one of the first off the blocks and actually start to happen in Duston.

And so, after almost exactly 153 years, we reach the position today, as outlined in the Officer Report and the submission on behalf of Duston Parish Council by Margaret Edwards. The wheel has almost turned full circle, and at the last meeting of Duston Parish Council the previous decisions to support and provide funding for this project were endorsed and re-affirmed, so it only remains for this Cabinet to approve the Officer Report and instruct the relevant Officers to proceed with the transfer proposals as suggested.

Thank you for listening.