

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

David Elmore
Development Control
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Campus East
Welwyn Garden City
Herts. AL10 6AE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

13th February 2019 (by email)

Dear Mr. Elmore,

Application No. 6/2019/0085/MAJ

Erection of building comprising sports hall with associated changing facilities and 7 x classrooms built on existing hard play tennis courts; 4 x hard play sports pitches to be provided to replace existing; provision of 33 x parking spaces; and two mobile classrooms to be provided for the duration of the project
At Chancellors School, Pine Grove, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 7BN

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this resubmission of previously withdrawn application 6/2018/2178/FULL for inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to the Green Belt policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, the current Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan and the Submission Local Plan currently under Examination in Public.

Under these policies the applicant is required to demonstrate very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the harm to the openness of, and other harm to the Green Belt.

The 'very special circumstance' put forward is that of Educational Need. However this is a circular argument. As the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application makes clear, in 2017 Hertfordshire County Council identified a shortfall of school spaces across the County (not specifically within the catchment area of Chancellors School). In spring of 2018 Chancellors agreed to admit an additional 30 pupils per year from September 2019 and then submitted a planning application to expand the school into the Green Belt in order to accommodate the new intake. In other words the school agreed to admit extra pupils when it did not have the capacity to do so and now uses that as the 'very special circumstance' to justify inappropriate development.

When considering the original application, the Highway Authority expressed concern at the inadequacies of the transport information accompanying the application. Similar concerns persist in the current application. The Travel Plan and Transport Assessment continue to be aspirational, stating that there is potential for both bus travel and car share to increase, when there is no evidence to demonstrate this. The majority of current pupils come from outside the Brookmans Park area, as will the proposed new intake and come primarily by

car. *“The incremental increase in pupils at the School presents a unique opportunity to alter parents travel habits”*, but does not guarantee a sustainable solution.

The roads serving the school are already congested, with parking on both sides of the narrow carriageway in Pine Grove. This will be exacerbated by expansion of the school population. Both Georges Wood Road and Golf Club Road have inadequate footway provision and it is not sufficient to say that because there has been a low accident count over the last five years that these are safe routes to the school.

The applicants also state a need to replace the two current gymnasia with a single, purpose built sports hall. This sports hall constitutes the bulk of the proposed development. It comes at the expense of existing sports provision on the Green Belt land. We note the holding objection from Sport England citing lack of sufficient information on the impact on the existing sports facilities and we share their concerns.

In consequence, we have considerable concerns regarding this application and urge the Council to reject the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving