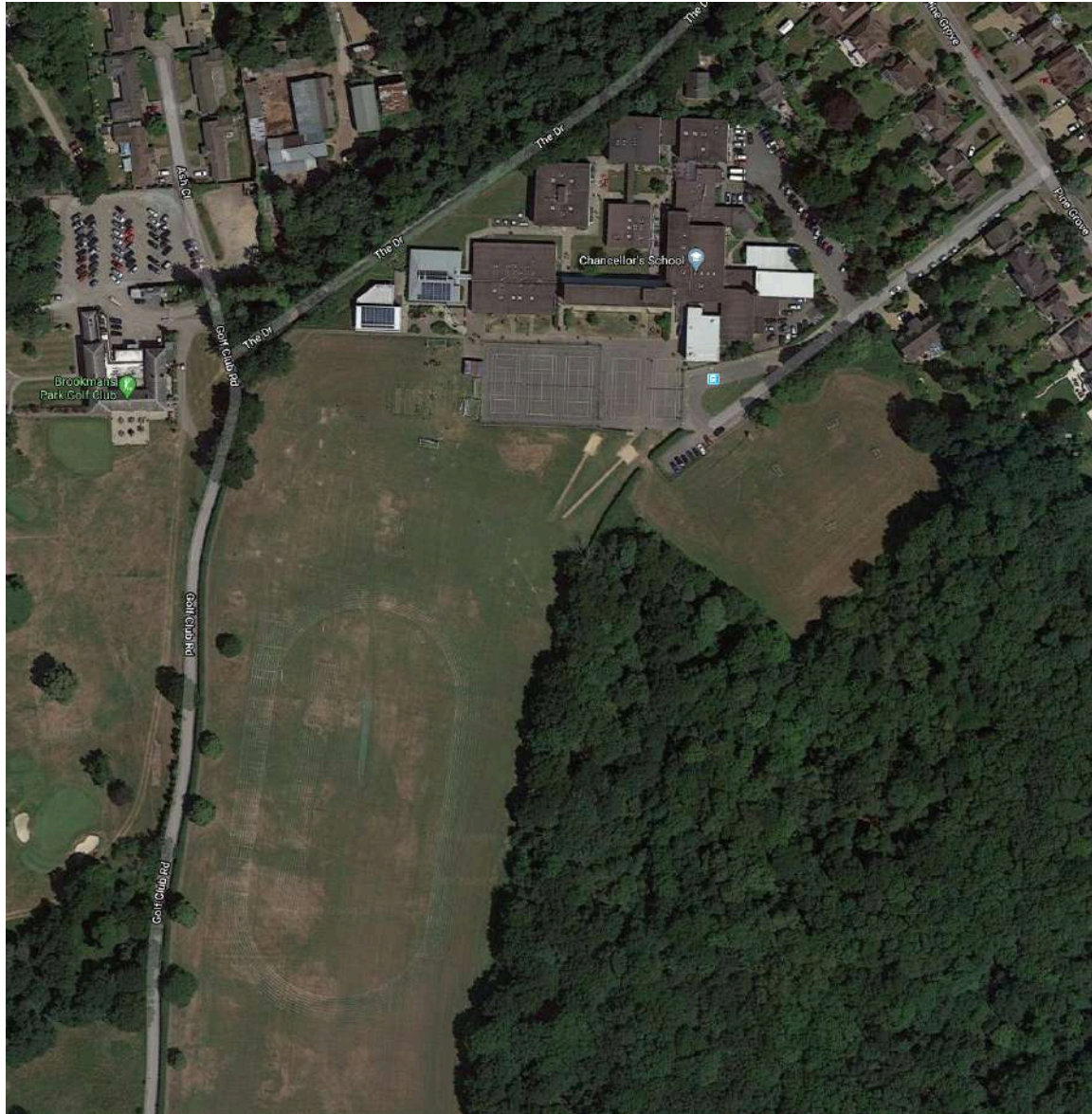


2154 Chancellor's School, Hertfordshire.

Additional Car Parking Places

Chancellor's School, Pine Grove, Hatfield AL9 7BN

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



Full Planning Application Submission.

Revision D - 10th November 2022

Background

Chancellor's School is a mixed 11-18 secondary school academy with sixth form located in Brookmans Park in Hertfordshire. The school has an excellent reputation for providing the very best education for all its students. In 2017, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) identified an increased demand for secondary spaces in the area.

Given the lack of alternatives for Hatfield, the expansion of Chancellor's was considered essential and very special circumstances were argued to support a planning application for extra accommodation. Therefore, in the Spring Term of 2018 Chancellor's school agreed to admit an additional 30 pupils to each year group from September 2019 onwards. The school now has a mixed intake of approximately 1300 students aged 11-18 years and by the end of the full expansion, it will have roughly 1400 on roll.

In July 2022, there were 138 staff working at the school: 65 full time Teaching staff, 21 part time Teaching staff, 43 Associate staff and 9 catering staff.

Teacher recruitment and the broader recruitment of school staff remains a significant challenge. The very special circumstances that were argued by the Local Authority to support the school's expansion in order to have sufficient school places locally still apply. It is vital that the school is adequately staffed to deliver the educational provision provided and keep children safe.

School staffing is a dynamic situation and there is never an exact number of staff as there will always be small changes in how the curriculum and pastoral support is organised and delivered. Sadly, we live in a time where staff come and go and often it is not possible to get a like for like replacement.

There are also additional members of staff who are not employees, namely trainee teachers. This number fluctuates each year as does the number of learning support assistants as this is determined by student need.

We have included a table to capture the current number of staff that we have, but please remember that not all of them drive and some of them are part-time and so effectively 'job-share' with another colleague.

	Autumn (#)	Spring (#)	Summer (#)
Trainees	6		
Teaching staff – unqualified	5		
Teaching staff – ECTs and ECTs+1	17 (ECTs – 4 and ECTs+1 – 13)		
Teaching staff – qualified	71		
Support staff	52 (includes SLT Administrator and HR Coordinator)		
HCL	9		
Total staff	160		

Due to the village location of the school, combined by the fact that it is unaffordable to live locally due to the house prices in the area and given the limited scope for car sharing due to the varied individual circumstances of school staff, the school requires approximately 130 parking spaces.

We have completed a postcode analysis of the current staff to demonstrate that, for the overwhelming majority of staff, it is extremely challenging for them to access the school without the use of a private car.

Barnet	6
Borehamwood	1
Brookmans Park	4
Broxbourne	2
Buntingford	1
Cheshunt	5
Dunstable, Bedfordshire	1
Enfield	4
Essendon	2
Harpenden	6
Hatfield	16
Hemel Hempstead	1
Hertford	8
Hitchin	3
Hoddesdon	2
London (N1, N21, N9, N12, E10, E16)	9
Luton, Bedfordshire	2
Northaw	3
Oxford	1
Potters Bar	17
St Albans	13
Stevenage	4
Ware	9
Watford	3
Welham Green	2
Welwyn Garden City	6

The school have consulted staff and 90 staff members state that they have no alternative other than private car. Whilst there may exist connections to travel from a nearby city such as St Albans to Brookmans Park, it is not really practical for teachers and school staff who need to be at school, ready for 8:15am start, particularly as public transport is not direct and a journey would involve connections and walking. (For example, a car journey from St Albans to Potters would take less than 20 minutes, which contrasts with two buses and the total journey time is over an hour at best, assuming that connections were immediate, which, in all likelihood, they would not be.)

Of the remaining staff, the vast majority describe a car share as the only alternative. However, this is not really a long term option for many staff due to the wide variety of staff commitments at the end of the school day. For instance, a teacher who is parent of a primary aged child could share a lift with a PE teacher as a one off, but it would not be a regular arrangement due to the commitments of the PE teacher.

There are currently approximately 1020 students in the lower school (years 7-11) which will increase to 1050 as the school reaches its full capacity in 2023-24. Additionally, there are currently approximately 220 students on roll in the sixth form, however there are approximately 30 further students who use the school and access its curriculum through the post 16 consortium arrangement with Mount Grace School. Therefore, whilst there will be approximately 1290 students officially on roll, there is a very real chance that a larger number will access the school as a result of the consortium arrangements.

In order to allow for the full expansion, we have anticipated the need for the equivalent of 3 more employees - 2 teachers and 1 member of support staff. This is what is currently modelled in our staffing structure. However, each year we have a turnover of approximately 10% of the workforce and replacements are not always like for like as it is not an exact science.

Currently, there are 103 spaces available on site. The car parking is fully used by staff and the remaining staff use informal street parking along the school access road and Pine Grove. The school finds street parking on Pine Grove causes problems with the flow of traffic and there is a strong indication that residents are keen to have parking restrictions in place in the future, which will remove this as an option. On the school access road, parking reduces the pedestrian pathway and increases the likelihood of a road traffic accident.

The proposed scheme would deliver a total 122 parking spaces for the school, broadly the required number of parking spaces for staff. This would positively affect the local area by limiting as much as possible the effect of school traffic and congestion.

Previously, in 2018, Lyster Grillet & Harding Ltd (LGH) were appointed to design and deliver the provision of additional accommodation that was deemed critical for the expansion - a single new build block to provide 7 classrooms and Sports Hall facilities, as well as a replacement hard-play sports pitch area and additional parking spaces.

Additionally, as part of the planning requirements, the school was required to implement a travel plan, which it has successfully. Despite the impact of Covid-19, the school has managed to maintain good numbers of students using both the school buses for transport and continues to actively promote independent travel to and from school as much as possible. They have worked extremely hard and closely with Hertfordshire County Council to promote sustainable travel and have secured the ModeShift Bronze Award and are working towards Silver Award.

The school currently has the following bus services:

- 2 or 3 buses serving Potters Bar
- 1 or 2 coaches providing a service to Hatfield
- 2 coaches serving Cuffley
- An additional coach serving the surrounding villages.

The school acts as a broker for one of the coach services to and from Cuffley. Currently one 53 seat coach is commissioned by the school and another is organised by HCC to promote a 'public transport link' between Cuffley and the school. Although it is not the school's responsibility to organise a bus service, the School have worked with Golden Boy to broker a coach for families based in Cuffley. This is because no commercial company was prepared to provide a service this route.

A different operator organises a coach from Hatfield to the school (and given the school's work to promote public transport, this may well be increased to a second coach in the afternoon) and a bus company operates two buses from Potters Bar. These are run by private companies who were appointed following a successful tender to HCC for the school contract.

There is another vehicle serving some of the other villages locally, which is arranged by Hertfordshire for a small number of eligible students entitled to free transport.

HCC only directly organises school travel for those students that they have an obligation for, which amounts to just under one coach of students who live in the villages and do not have public transport alternatives.

South Mimms Coaches (who operate 1 coach currently, but have strongly indicated that they may put on a second in the afternoon) and Sullivan buses (2 or 3 buses) are the preferred operators for home

school contracts between Hatfield and Chancellor's and Potters Bar and Chancellor's respectively. Neither have plans to expand the service although they would certainly be willing if the demand was there to make it profitable.

The school continues to encourage further uptake and, as students join the school, leaders now conduct face-to-face interviews with parents and students to promote the importance of secondary aged children travelling independently to and from school. This has had a notable positive impact on public transport uptake, walking and cycling. We also promote car sharing with parents, students and staff for whom the school buses is not an option.

As part of the approved development, adjusted drop-off bays were implemented along the school access road and 33 additional car parking spaces were created.

The parking is used fully by staff on a daily basis and has taken 33 school related vehicles off the school access road and Pine Grove. This was designed to alleviate the historic inadequate parking provision on site and ease the staff parking congestion along the school access road and Pine Grove. The car drop off is working extremely well both in the mornings and afternoon.

- In the morning, there is a steady flow of buses and private cars using it to drop off children.
- In the afternoon, it is used by the buses only at school pick up time. Parents do use the turning circle in the afternoon, as there is a period of time in the afternoon when it is not possible to use it as the school access road is blocked by the parked buses waiting to collect the hundreds of students using the buses. This has always been the case. Therefore, at the end of school parents/carers wait on Pine Grove or the other surrounding roads to collect their children if they travel by car. They normally arrive from 2:30pm and leave by 3:15pm and, as everyone is leaving Pine Grove, usually by 3:20pm the vast amount of school has left the road
- The turning circle is again used for any car pick ups that happen after school for extra-curricular activities.

This combined with the original school car park, which has a capacity of 63 car parking spaces and is accessed through the main entrance to the school, and the overspill car park (7 spaces), which is at the end of the school access road, provides the total of 103 car spaces.

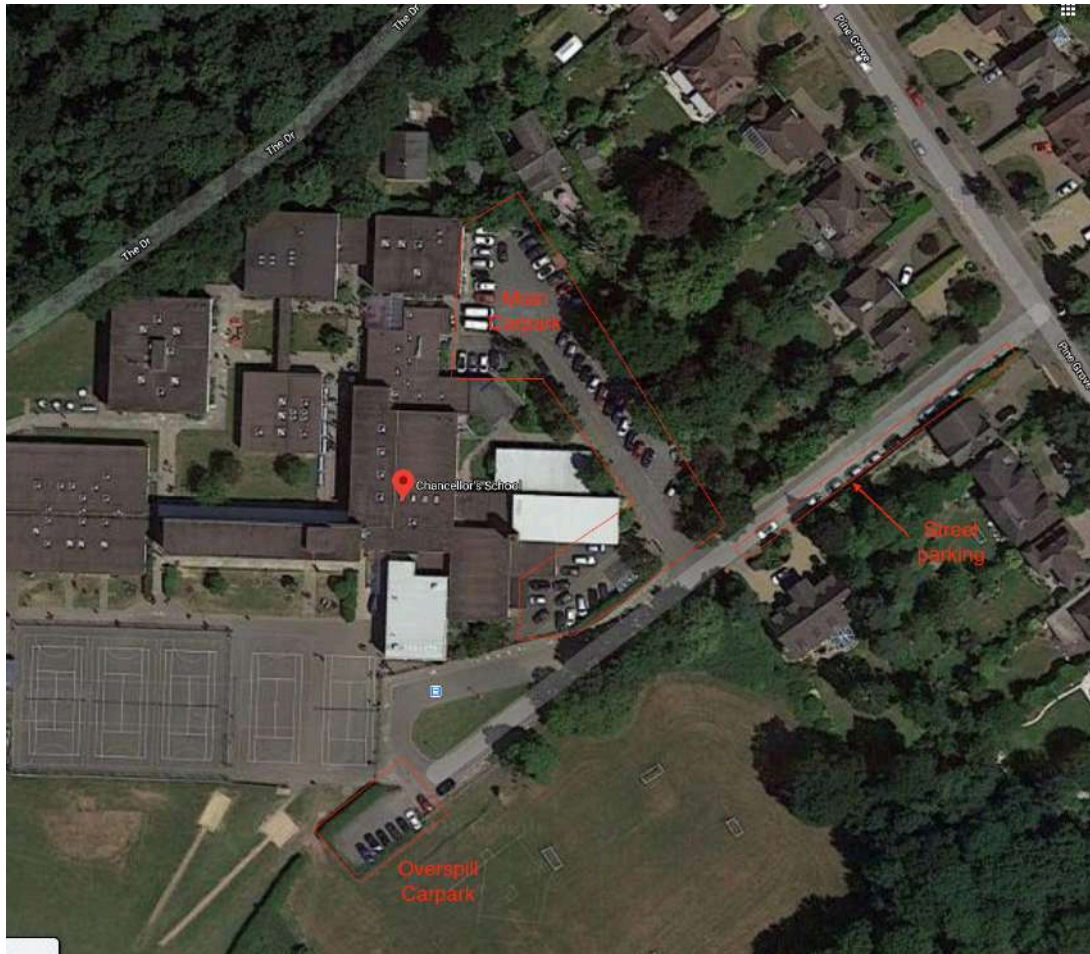
The overspill parking at the end of the school access would become incorporated in the proposed scheme. Therefore, the proposed scheme would provide a net 19 extra spaces.

Whilst the proposed scheme will not fully address the parking need, it will be the best compromise given the existing development of the site and the school's location in the green belt.

The school currently have planning permission for the laying of engineered surface for the provision of additional car parking and erection of fencing (temporary period of three years) under approval reference 6/2020/2581/FULL, dated 3 March 2021. This temporary period expires on the 1st March 2024.

The additional car parking provided over this temporary period has worked well and helped alleviate previous existing car parking issues within the proximity of the school. The school are keen to now avoid a situation where car parking issues potentially revert back to the previous unsatisfactory arrangements and wish to secure full planning approval for the car parking (as currently offered on a temporary basis).

There are very special circumstances for the additional parking planning application as these spaces are essential for the school to be able to provide adequate parking for staff and therefore be fully staffed and operate safely.



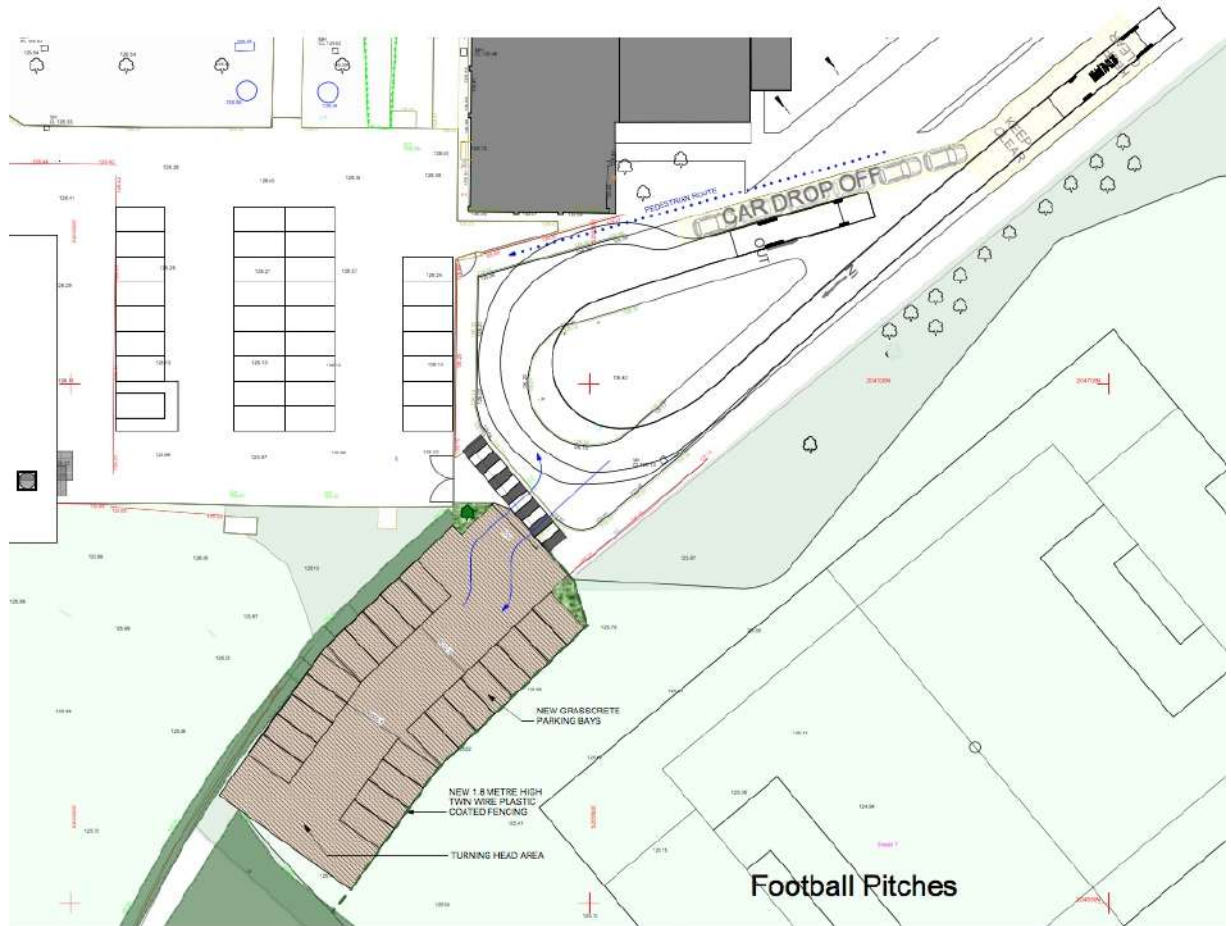
Current Parking sites at Chancellor's School



Existing Parking at Chancellor's School

Location and Site

The site is located along the school access road, which joins Pine Grove at a T-junction. The school owns the road and therefore will not need to apply for permission from The Highways Agency to carry out the works. The location of this proposed additional parking has been carefully considered as the options have been very limited without considerably encroaching onto the existing main sports field. An added benefit of this proposed site is that access to the car park will be via the existing road.



Proposed Site plan

Proposals

The new car park will occupy an area of existing temporary parking whilst extending into the adjoining smaller playing field area to the south of the bus turning circle. Access to the parking spaces will be via the existing bus turning circle. An existing zebra crossing enables safe passage of pupils and pedestrians across the entrance area of the new carpark and also the existing car parking associated with the new sports hall (as previously approved). Although the car park will be encroaching on to the edge of the playing field it will not affect the current use and will remain well clear of any marked pitches.

The proposed car park bays are positioned either side of a centralised access route which allows ease of access to parking bays. A turning head area is located at the end of the access route to facilitate ease of vehicle movements. The parking surface will be constructed using a permeable 'Grasscrete' type product, which has been selected as it only requires a shallow sub-base, whilst having good load bearing capacity, improving storm water absorption and providing a sustainable drainage solution. This product will also reduce the visual impact of the car parking surface by avoiding solid areas of tarmac. A new fence will separate the new car parking area from the adjacent sports field.

Planning Policy

In addressing the issue of 'Need' for the car park and also why this site in the Green Belt has been chosen we have considered the proposals in the context of the following key issues:

Relevant Planning Policies:

1. The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) applies to all developments.
2. Relevant Saved and Emerging Local Plan Policies are outlined below Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
 3. SD1 – Sustainable Development GBSP1 – Definition of the Green Belt
 4. GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements
 5. R1 – Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land
 6. R11 – Biodiversity and Development
 7. R20 – Light Pollution
 8. M14 – Parking Standards for New Development
 9. D1 – Quality of Design
 10. D2 – Character and Context
 11. D8 – Landscaping OS2 – Playing Pitch Provision
 12. CLT8 – New and Extended Education Facilities
 13. RA10 – Landscape Regions and Character Areas

Other supplementary policies:

Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (SDG)

Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards 2004 (SPG) Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes 2014 (Interim Parking Policy)

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016:

SP1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

SP3 – Settlement Strategy and Green Belt Boundaries

SP4 – Transport and Travel

SADM2 – Highway Network and Safety

SP6 – Community Services and Facilities

SADM7 – New Community Services and Facilities, and Losses of Community Services and Facilities

SP9 – Place-making and High Quality Design

SADM11 – Amenity and Layout

SADM12 – Parking, Servicing and Refuse

SADM16 – Ecology and Landscape

SADM18 – Environmental Pollution

SADM34 – Development in the Green Belt

In reviewing the relevant policy documents together with the Preplanning advice received to date on the new sports hall project, the main points to address when considering this type of development are as follows:

- **Green Belt:** Whether the proposal comprises appropriate development within the Green Belt and if not whether there are any very special circumstances to overcome the harm to the Green Belt.
- **Impact upon the character and appearance of the area**
- **Impact upon the amenities of nearby occupiers**

Addressing these issues in turn;

Green Belt - GBC1 Appropriate Development in the Green Belt

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF sets out forms of development that are appropriate within the Green Belt. The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan defines the greenbelt under Policy GBSP1 -Definition of the greenbelt.

Other than an area of new fence separating the car parking from the small playing field area there will be no elevated structures associated with the parking area. To this end the presence of the parking bays themselves and their impact on the Green Belt is considered minimal. This will help reduce the impact of the current situation as cars currently park wherever there is any available space on the road or straddling pavements.

The proposals will assist in further improving and rationalising parking within the school. The aforementioned location of the school, the unaffordable cost of housing for teachers in the area and increased teacher number requirements places great pressure on parking space availability.

Policy R1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 refers to:

- Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land

In order to make the best use of land in the district, the Council will require development to take place on land which has been previously used or developed. Development will only be permitted on 'greenfield' land where it can be demonstrated that no suitable opportunities exist on previously used or developed land.

We have carefully considered the location and have used a minimal area of playing fields that will not impact on the use or encroach into any of the marked pitches. The area proposed for the new parking spaces is not actually used for sports activities and as such there will be no loss of provision experienced by the school.

We believe that very special circumstances exist to support this application for provision of additional car parking due to the increased numbers of teachers required to support the additional pupil numbers effectively.

Given the siting of the proposals we do not believe the proposals will constitute a harmful impact on the Green Belt.

Impact upon the character and appearance of the area.

With the careful positioning of the car park within the school grounds and the proposed surface treatment the visual impact is minimal for both the school and neighbouring properties. Essentially the proposals are located predominantly out of sight of the local residents and neighbouring properties, and as such, has negligible impact on the character and appearance of the area. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be cars parked in these spaces, they will predominantly only be there during normal school hours. No existing trees are to be removed as a result of this development.

Impact upon the amenities of nearby occupiers.

Given existing issues associated with school and neighbours, provision of additional car park spaces can only be of benefit to the nearby occupiers. The proposals will help reduce street based parking and alleviate restricted traffic flow caused by cars parked by school users.

Summary

Whilst the provision of additional car parking has been specifically proposed to address existing shortfalls together now with increased demand arising from increased numbers of pupil/teachers there is heightened pressure on parking arising from the lasting impact and ongoing concerns of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional car journeys and therefore parking requirements are increased due to the Covid measures and staff/parents/students not using public transport or car sharing opportunities. This is not a situation anyone could have envisaged however when combined with increased requirements for additional staff parking provision it is only likely to get worse going forward.

The parking capacity at the school is fully used. There is simply not sufficient parking on the school site or space on the school access road to provide all staff with parking. Currently, 12 staff have to regularly use Pine Grove on a daily basis to park their car during the school day. With the final year of expansion in the lower school and then the resulting impact on the sixth form numbers in future, this requirement is likely to increase further by 3 staff.

As the residents have not recently been parking on Pine Grove, the issues on Pine Grove have only been occasional and this has usually been when new users (such as new Year 7 parents when their children start at the school) are introduced to the road. Road users generally learn very quickly how the road operates at school pick up and drop off times. Some residents do remain irritated by waiting cars at afternoon pick up time, as it can inconvenience them and, occasionally, cars block them from accessing their drives.

In the past, when some of the residents protested by parking on either side of the road, which, when combined with the staff and student parking on the road, prevented safe passing points for the traffic using Pine Grove. When this happens, there is a very real risk for an extremely dangerous and chaotic situation to develop (as we have had in the past).

The school has met with council/local MPs to discuss the issue on Pine Grove and a commitment made to look at solutions to address local resident concerns. Informal advice and support has been offered with regards these measures and the introduction of additional car parking spaces.

To alleviate the current parking shortage for the school users it is essential to introduce this new on-site temporary, parking area. The new car park has been carefully positioned, given the existing school grounds where available space is very restricted and avoids reduction of existing playing field area with minimal visual impact on the local surroundings.

If the additional parking is not granted approval on a permanent basis there will likely be greater concern amongst neighbours beyond March 2023 where cars currently parking in the temporary provision will be, yet again, forced to park on verges and footpaths in and around the neighbouring residential area. This would clearly represent a significant backwards step in addressing the current car parking issues at the school and not be good for the ongoing relationship between the school and residents.

The proposed site is accessible via the existing access road to and from the school. The parking availability over the current temporary period has proved to work well and as such we hope that permanent planning approval will be granted for this much needed permanent parking provision.