

Welwyn Hatfield Council

Planning Department

From: , 69 Pine Grove, Brookmans Park, Hatfield Herts, AL9 7BL.

Application 6/2019/20085/Full.. now MAJ

10 February 2019

Dear Sirs

I wish to file Objections and Comments against the above Application.

I am a resident of a house adjoining the school.

It may be pleasing to hear that this school which was threatened with closure at one time is enjoying such success and that it is yet again looking to expand its capacity of students. However this is environmentally questionable and inevitably will bring increased impact on residents. There is an already unacceptable traffic load at the present time, due to double-side parking in a narrow cul-de-sac often for much of its length most of the day. This gets worse during the school year as more 6<sup>th</sup> Formers acquire cars. These problems will only become aggravated with more pupils possibly from a greater catchment area due to the school's Application for Conversion to Academy Status.

Located as it is deep within a residential area and approached by a relatively narrow road this must be a matter of real concern if the plan and the development is accepted. Voluminous documentation has been submitted defending the present unsatisfactory travel access and parking situation, and the submission of trite, vague possible solutions. There is much wishful thinking on car sharing or similar measures. There is still no adequate submission of a constructive travel plan which will eliminate the use of the car in bringing pupils and staff to the school.

This is a school within the Green Belt. The plan envisages further "waterproofing" of land by new buildings, and more car-parking; and probably removal of grassed areas and more trees. No thought seems to have been given either to replacing the existing single story buildings with two-storey constructions. The proposal is that the extended site will be spread over an enlarged area giving rise to an aesthetically unattractive ramshackle collection of buildings in unsatisfactory materials.

Transport Means:

Inadequate consideration of the impact on the transport needs of pupils and staff has been given apart from creation of 'increased parking'. The latter is an expensive privilege... which the population in a rural area cannot sustain without suffering the environmental cost and inconvenience caused, in particular to residents in Pine Grove and the adjoining feeder roads and Bell Lane. Elsewhere in Brookmans Park, and Potters Bar etc such a cost-free parking privilege no longer exists. Public Transport contractors must be consulted to ensure that adequate services can bring large numbers of pupils close to the site in large double deck buses along the Great North Road, as happened in the earlier years of the school. The current provision of special school buses off-loading at the school is not used by sufficient numbers of pupils to relieve the traffic problem. Congestion at the junction of Georges Wood Road with the Great North Road, the widely used approach road for vehicles coming

from the main catchment area in South Hatfield may on safety grounds lead to the requirement of traffic lights here where the current speed limit of 40mph is dangerously high.

#### Parking:

It is essential that Pine Grove should have the same kind of parking provisions met elsewhere locally in Brookmans Park in its Primary School, or adjacent to schools in for instance Potters Bar or Hatfield, or further afield in Cuffley. This would mean restricted parking in Pine Grove and adjacent roads, Bull Lane, Georges Wood Road by time, e.g. 11-12 a.m., or 1 hour only; yellow lines, or 'resident only' parking at cost.

It is vital that if this future plan is adopted that it embraces a more constructive solution for bringing pupils and staff to the facility. Pupils and staff must be discouraged from using personal vehicles parked throughout the day whether on site or in Pine Grove. It is worth noting the recent headline article in The Times (19 January 2019) (attached) where some local authorities are considering a plan to impose parking charges on business premises of £1000 per vehicle per year to relieve congestion. While this might be a useful income generating move for the local authority, it is unlikely to be popular with families of pupils or staff.

Walking or cycling to school should also be encouraged or even insisted on by banning pupil delivery near the school by private car. This would be compatible with the national aim and county policy to make for a healthier population. Suggestions that pupils might walk from an off-loading point on the Village Green near the Station are perhaps also unrealistic in terms of distance from the school even though such a walk twice a day would be healthy for pupils and staff!

In the plan there are calculations on arriving at the foreseen number of parking places. However, it may be that a future local government plan might reduce such parking recommendations perhaps already stretched in the calculations made in the submitted plan. See

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1075&p=0>

Pine Grove itself is a road adopted for 'maintenance purposes only' by the local authority when the school was built. The road was not designed for the heavy traffic to which it is now subjected on a daily basis. Until the recent repairs in December 2018 it has been a poorly maintained road with numerous potholes and repairs and central surface erosion. It has experienced numerous minor accidents in recent months, though I understand that only one was of serious nature where vehicles collided head-on on the bend in Pine Grove where visibility is poor.

#### Source of Pupils:

From the information made available from the school and in the submission I understand that only 15% of pupils reside in Brookmans Park, the remainder being transported in from elsewhere, in particular South Hatfield. From the submission by the school table 2.21 around 50% of 1100 pupils are brought by car to the school each day from either Hatfield or Potters Bar, the majority with only 1 pupil. With staff this represents perhaps some 500 cars arriving and departing from Pine Grove morning and afternoon within a very short time period.

There is a contradiction on information from the County on the need to expand school places; The Herts CC Website/ Education still has available a table (attachment: Chance expansion need 181019

Excel) which indicates that when combined with Potters Bar rather than Hatfield, there is no lack of places in secondary schools up to 2021. So, if there is no pressure from the County to expand the school what is the reason, justification and need for the expansion plan of Chancellor's School?

However, the article in the Welwyn Hatfield Times

<https://www.whtimes.co.uk/news/education/welwyn-garden-city-and-brookmans-park-schools-to-expand-1-5462442> of 4 April 2018 suggests that the County had agreed to the expansion to accommodate Hatfield pupils.

There has also been discussion in the local paper for a proposal of building a new school on the 'Barnfield' site in Hatfield. This surely would be adjacent to the main source of pupils, and where further population growth is anticipated?

Other Comments:

1. The prime attention of the school has been made to the planning application and provision of further parking on site without declaring whether these are for staff or pupils, and without any consideration of the inconvenience, environmental and pollution consequences for the local residents due to the substantial increase in traffic envisaged.
2. It is understood that there has been a substantial decrease in demand for the buses provided for pupils since the local authority removed the subsidy to the operator or school in charging fares to the pupils. Consideration should be given by the local authority to reinstating such a subsidy to reduce traffic in the area, though this would need to be coupled with some traffic limitation into Pine Grove to ensure that it was complied with.
3. If adjacent roads are used for pupils to walk to school, provision of footpaths in such roads as Georges Wood Road, Mymms Drive, and possibly also Bell Lane may be necessary. The latter road is widely used on a loop back to the Great north Road for delivering and collecting pupils. As many as 30 or more cars are lined up in the afternoon for collecting pupils, and there is normally also parking near the junction with the Great North Road on the existing Yellow Line non-parking road!
4. A proposal for possible use of The Drive, the potholed bridle path N of the school, and now a private road but with pedestrian and horse access seems unrealistic and has rightly been discounted in the submitted travel plan. Further, no consideration seems to have been given for use of that part of The Drive towards Golf Club Road to promote a circular one way traffic flow. This would necessitate conversion of the bridle way to a proper road and should be objected to on other environmental grounds. There is no footpath in Golf Club Road and the footpath on the school field still leaves some 100 metres of a narrow road without footpath provision.

Pine Grove Residents' proposals:

I am aware that many residents in Pine Grove have long been envious of the situation elsewhere in Brookmans Park where parking limitations exist. If the plan goes ahead in anything like its present form, residents will seek this kind of potential solution to the parking and traffic problem in Pine Grove. This might be coupled with some form of speed limitation to enforce what is assumed to be the speed limit in Pine Grove of 20mph as in Georges Wood Road. (The Application is surely incorrect when it states that the speed limit in Pine Grove is 30mph.)

Safety: Right of way: Pine Grove users should have right of way; with appropriate halt / give way road marking on exiting from the school approach road, also called Pine Grove.

Conclusion:

I am opposed to the plan for enlargement of Chancellor's School.

I believe that the school is large enough. If population growth in Hatfield and/or Potters Bar calls for further school places then they should be found within those two towns.

I believe that a school should be built in the catchment area of the school, rather than transport pupils and staff over considerable and unnecessary distance.

I believe that it is essential for alternative ways to be studied and realised to greatly reduce traffic and parking in Pine Grove and surrounding service roads, and the environmental and adverse pollution effect of this level of traffic on the resident population.

The local community should not have to tolerate this environmental abuse and alternative solutions should be found.

The proposed plan does not take into consideration the current environmental needs and travel needs of the school.

Attachments:

Extracts from The Times, January 19, 2019: Chance pkg charge 1 (PDF); Chance pkg charge 2 (PDF); Times Leader on Parking the Issue.

Table: from Herts CC Website: Chancellor future expansion need 181210 (Excel)