

Objection to Planning Application 6/2019/0085/MAJ

The application should be refused on the following grounds: -

1. Necessity. The case for the necessity of the works set out in the proposal has not been made, a requirement of both planning regulations and planning law. The statement in the submitted Design and Access Statement that 'It was determined that Chancellor's was well placed to expand and take an additional form of entry to meet the basic need for school places in the Hatfield area' (p.2) cannot by any reasonable standard be considered a full and complete justification for the necessity of the expansion of Chancellors School, especially given the existence of the site at New Barnfield;
2. Incompleteness. The application is incomplete. Whilst the application lists after school-based clubs and events, it does not mention the numerous activities that are provided by commercial and community organizations who use the facilities. For example, Evans Cycles hosts two bike rides from the school over a weekend. The school has in the past let a local religious community use its playground as a parking area at the weekend, with the community being bussed to their place of worship. The proposed expansion is likely to further increase opportunities for the school to offer the new and existing facilities to community and commercial organizations outside of school hours, to the further detriment of the resident's reasonable enjoyment of their property;
3. Inaccuracies. The Transport Assessment contains statements that lack evidence or are erroneous: these undermine the efficacy of the application. Specifically:
 - a. 'Traffic flows on the highway network are typically at their highest during the weekday AM (08:00-09:00) and PM (17:00-18:00) periods. (p.4)' No evidence is provided to support this statement. Currently, traffic from the two schools in the village at the end of the school day may well change the timing of the PM peak traffic flows;
 - b. The statements around traffic fatalities and accidents are erroneous.
 - i. First, as the accidents listed in Table 2.1 of the Transport Assessment are attributed as nothing to do with the school. This is correct. They are, however, features of the driving population at large. The assessment fails to point out that as the number of vehicles using the local road network rises with the proposed expansion, the number of accidents will also rise;
 - ii. Second, the timeframe considered in Table 2.1 appears arbitrary. Whilst no RTA fatality is noted in the timeframe considered in the Transport Assessment, data from Hertfordshire Constabulary listed in the Economic and Social Data Service (HM Government) shows that there have been 13 fatalities on the A1000 between its junctions with High Street, Potters Bar and South Way, Hatfield (the two main locations of Chancellors pupils homes) in the years 1999-2010 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15975720?#>). Of these, four occurred in the section of the A1000 between its two junctions with Bell Lane, an area that is likely to become even more congested if the application granted;

- iii. Third, whilst no fatalities were noted in the time period reviewed in Table 2.1, this may be no more than a statistical blip. This notion is supported by the examination of the data from a wider range of dates than those offered in the assessment. This was not considered in the assessment;
- iv. Fourth, whilst there have been no fatalities noted in the Assessment, it is incorrect to say there is 'no existing road safety problem (p6)'. Absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence – a fatal accident could occur tomorrow;
- v. The change in transport mode from the current proportions in Table 6.1 of the Transport Assessment to those in Table 6.2 should not be considered in the application. There is no evidence to support the notion that such a change is possible, especially given the current attitude of the school to current transport related problems. Currently, the school declines to accept any responsibility for parking problems caused by pupils, parents or staff (this is based on telephone calls to the school to address parking problems (blocking driveways, blocking access to The Drive, parking on corners – all of which contravene the Highway Code)). As the school cannot address current parking issues to any great effect, the claim that it can change current transport modes should be dismissed as fanciful conjecture. Given this, the planning application fails to adequately demonstrate the impact of the most likely increase in traffic volumes on the immediate community and transport infrastructure;
- vi. The Transport Assessment fails to assess the current dangerous parking situation in Pine Grove, limiting itself to consideration of pupil drop off and pick up issues. Further expansion will make the current untenable parking situation worse both from transportation and parking perspectives. Pine Grove is already heavily congested with parking during the hours of school activity. The northern end of the road is effectively reduced to a single-track road during these times, as seen in the photograph below: -



- c. Given the parking illustrated above and the effective reduction of Pine Grove to a single-track road, it is already highly unlikely that the emergency services could reach either a property or indeed the school in a timely manner in the event of an emergency. As Chancellors refuses to accept responsibility for current parking issues, it is unlikely that the current parking situation will change despite the provision of further carparking in the proposal. Any additional increase in congestion further threatens the safety and wellbeing of local residents and members of the school;
 - d. The congestion has already reached serious proportions: Hertfordshire Constabulary have on many occasions been called to supervise parking during open evenings in order to prevent conflicts with local residents. Expansion will increase the potential for further conflicts requiring the presence of Hertfordshire Constabulary;
 - e. Given the **realistic** maintenance of current modes of transport to and from the school under the proposed expansion, the congestion illustrated above (as well as during evenings and weekends) is likely to worsen, thus further undermining residents rights to the quiet and reasonable enjoyment of their property and their quality of life;
 - f. Therefore, based on these shortcomings in the Transport Assessment, the statement that is 'no existing road safety problem in the area (p6)' is at best erroneous and at worst misleading.
4. The proposals contained in the application are unattractive and unsuitable given the location in the Green Belt. Given the vistas across the adjacent Golf Course and the

prominent position of the school on a high point in the area, the proposals represent a serious visual degradation of the area.

Therefore, the application should be refused as:

- It fails to make the case for the necessity for the expansion of Chancellors School;
- It is incomplete as it fails to fully address the complete range of uses of the school facilities;
- The proposal is inaccurate, as the Traffic Assessment is based on a restricted range of traffic accident data that minimizes the road traffic risks and a modal transport split that is hypothetical rather than realistic. Further, it entirely fails to address the current dangerous parking situation in Pine Grove. This undermines the entire case that the proposal has little impact on either the local road infrastructure or the residents of Pine Grove.
- The proposed works are unsympathetic and unsuitable for a Green Belt location and contribute the visual degradation of the area.

Overall the proposals represent a serious deprivation of the resident's rights to the quiet and reasonable enjoyment of their properties.