

## **Revised response from CGPC**

### **Consultation by HCC on proposals for Breakspeare school**

Reference School Planning

Postal Point CHO136

**Consultation on the permanent enlargement of Breakspeare School, Gallows Hill Lane, Abbots Langley, WD5 0BU from 97 to 210 places with effect from September 2023 and the relocation of the school to the former Durrants School Playing Field, Manor way, Croxley Green, WD3 3LU**

Thank you for your letter of 19 October 2021.

We are very grateful to Samantha Young, one of your Senior School Planning Officers, for attending the Parish Council's Planning & Development Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November.

She explained the proposals and the process leading up to this consultation and answered questions on a number of matters of local concern.

Croxley Green Parish Council has a number of concerns about the proposals and would be grateful for further information.

As a number of local residents attended the meeting we will be posting a copy of this response on the Parish Council's website and sharing it with local County and District Councillors.

#### **Consultation process**

Samantha Young explained that this consultation is part of a statutory process following Department for Education procedures. It seems to the Parish Council that these proposals have been under consideration by Hertfordshire County Council for some time and we believe the information provided in this consultation is inadequate for us to make a proper assessment of the proposals and give a fully informed response.

It would be helpful to have reference to and details of the various studies and committee reports that have led to the current proposals, so that we may better understand the rationale leading to the proposed relocation at this site.

We would like to see the evidence that other sites and options have been considered and the basis on which the decision has been made to consult on this particular proposal.

**Consultation on the permanent enlargement of Breakspeare School, Gallows Hill Lane, Abbots Langley, WD5 0BU from 97 to 210 places with effect from September 2023**

Samantha Young summarised the reasons for the need to expand provision in Hertfordshire and the strategy to provide an extra 100 places in the west and 100 in the east of the county.

We acknowledge and support the need for adequate provision, but we question the desirability of providing the services at a single larger site as this will inevitably increase the distances travelled by those using the school and therefore tend to increase carbon dioxide emissions, directly contrary to the Government's ambitions to reduce them and global warming.

We would like to see the full travel and transport analysis that has been carried out in support of this decision.

Samantha Young explained the reasons why the site at Gallows Hill Lane is no longer fit for purpose and why further expansion or rebuilding on the site is not a practical option.

We can understand that opinion but we would like to see the analysis that has been carried out to support it, including any financial or economic analysis.

We understand that the area served by Breakspeare School has the greatest unmet demand and support increased local provision but not necessarily by a single larger school on a completely new site.

**Consultation on the relocation of the school to the former Durrants School Playing Field, Manor way, Croxley Green, WD3 3LU**

The Parish Council has concerns about the suitability of this site for the proposed development.

Samantha Young stated that no alternative sites were being proposed in this consultation.

The Parish Council takes the view that this is an unacceptable position as there are many options and the decision making process so far seems to have excluded them.

We would like to have details of ALL the sites currently owned or controlled by Hertfordshire County Council within the reasonable catchment area of the current Gallows Hill Lane site.

We understand from Samantha Young that there is provision in Hemel Hempstead and in St Albans. Therefore the proposed new school will be serving Watford, Three Rivers and possibly parts of Hertsmere.

We would like to see that all the sites currently owned or controlled by HCC and the relevant District Councils have been considered and the reasons for which they have been determined unsuitable (or less suitable). Particularly any former educational establishments.

As well as sites already in public ownership or control, the County Council can negotiate for the purchase of a suitable site and presumably has, in extremis, powers of compulsory purchase.

We would like to see what attempts have been made to find more suitable alternative sites for purchase by negotiation or using statutory powers.

Our principal concerns about the suitability of this site for the proposed development are matters generally covered under planning. However they are fundamental problems, not matters of detail which detailed design can address and ameliorate.

The Parish Council takes the view that they should be considered as part of the strategic decision making process rather than being left to a subsequent planning application.

### **Green Belt**

The proposed site is on the playing fields of the former Durrants School, closed in 1991 and is currently within the Green Belt. The Durrants School buildings were not in the Green Belt. The playing fields were included in the Green Belt. The built area of the school was demolished and the land sold for residential development. Consequently any new buildings will further erode the Green Belt. There is relatively little Green Belt remaining within Croxley Green and the Parish Council opposes any new building development within the Green Belt.

Samantha Young explained that the proposal is to use part of the site for the new school buildings and retain part of the site to potentially become additional playing field provision for Croxley Danes School.

The adopted Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan includes a specific aim

*“AIM 21: Former Durrants School playing field*

*The Parish Council will work with Herts CC and others to bring the former Durrants School playing field, now used for agricultural purposes, into recreational open space use for the community.”*

This proposed building development conflicts with that aim.

### **Travel, transport and accessibility**

The proposed site is not readily accessible from any direction.

The original approach, through Manor Way, is now a residential cul de sac. We have been told these roads are privately owned and maintained and question whether Hertfordshire County Council has retained a right of access.

Even if there is a right of access Manor Way is not suitable for either the construction traffic that will be required, or for the amount of traffic that will be required to take staff, pupils and visitors to and from the site.

An alternative access would be from Little Green Lane, which is currently an unmade narrow single carriageway with mature and well-established hedgerows that is unsuitable for motor traffic (and also the subject of a local petition to close it to through traffic).

The Parish Council would object, on behalf of local residents, to any proposal to improve it or to use it as an access route to the proposed school.

Another alternative would be an access from Lincoln Drive across the grounds of Little Green School. Residents have pointed out that there is already dreadful traffic congestion on Lincoln Drive and adjoining roads due to parents and carers delivering and collecting primary school children by car. Any access from Lincoln Drive or Rochester Way would only exacerbate the problem.

### **Development timetable**

We note that the outline timetable does not specifically include any provision for securing planning permission. In view of the sensitivity of this site and the likely public concern we respectfully suggest that implementation commencing in September 2023 and being ready for occupation by January 2024 seems optimistic if not unrealistic.

### **Communication and Consultation**

We are grateful to Samantha Young for coming to a parish council meeting to explain the proposals in more detail and to answer questions. We encourage Hertfordshire County Council to develop a communication and consultation strategy to keep the local community and residents fully informed throughout the process. Not simply to carry out the statutory requirements as a tick box exercise but to fully engage the local community in the whole of the decision making process.