



Re: Planning Application 18/506656/FULL

Erection of a new two-storey primary school and special educational needs secondary school with formation of new access onto Bearsted Road, together with associated car parking and drop off area, pedestrian access, drainage, areas for formal and informal outdoor play and landscaping works. Popes field Bearsted Road Weaving

Bearsted Parish Council strongly object to this application for several reasons, as detailed.

This application appears to be a desperate attempt to provide necessary Primary & SEN education facilities, presumably at the lowest cost but, at the same time, incurring serious risks to child safety and of traffic chaos and disruption to the local community. This 'trade off' between location/cost and human safety and quality of life is unjustifiable and totally unacceptable.

Poor location

The Primary school is said to serve the Maidstone area yet is situated in the North East corner of the catchment area. Inevitably this means more/unnecessary travel for many pupils/parents causing unnecessary environmental and traffic issues. Despite being requested the applicant has failed to supply demographic information regarding the specific location of potential pupils. Since the school is 'planned' for operation by 2020 the location of pupils, at least for the first 4 years, should be known, since these children are already born. Presumably such factual information would contradict assumptions that the applicant has used?

Traffic

In total, with Primary pupils, SEN students, Nursery children and staff there will be over 650 people accessing and exiting this site daily, mainly in peak hours. The assumptions used for the amount of additional traffic that this would generate are misleading and, therefore, erroneous. One wildly optimistic assumption is that 59.3% of primary pupils will walk to school. Since, as stated above, there are no demographics as to where the pupils live this 'estimate' is based solely on other schools. However, most of those schools are situated in or near the centre of the population they serve. This is clearly not the case with this application. As demonstrated by the applicants own figures, Bearsted Road is an extremely busy road, especially at rush/school hours when traffic levels are at capacity. The effect of the aforementioned controlled pedestrian crossing, plus the proposed two further build-outs to provide traffic calming, on traffic flow/congestion have not been mentioned. Inevitably the slowed/halted traffic will create a 'tailback' to the KIMS roundabout thereby negating the improved traffic flow which KCC are planning to achieve with an £11m expenditure.

Bearsted Parish Council



Further, traffic travelling West along Bearsted Road will be unable to turn right into the site and will have no option but to continue to the KIMS roundabout, thereby doubling the estimated additional traffic using this roundabout.

Parking

The plan shows parking spaces for 81 cars. These will be taken up by teachers/staff. Although the applicant claims a further 49 drop off spaces, the plan shows only 26. These will be taken primarily by the proposed mini buses/taxis for SEN students, leaving very few spaces for parents. Since 1st & 2nd year pupils have to be seen to be met by a teacher/parent and even taking into account the unproven/ridiculous assumption of 59.3% walking this means that 49 parents will need drop off spaces to bring/collect their child. Even if this figure is reduced by siblings travelling together there are still another 120 pupils to be brought/collected in the proposed one hour slots. With a single access to the site and the necessity for all traffic to turn left on leaving, there is going to be a total bottle neck, both within the parking area and on the Bearsted Road. Added to this frustrated parents, unable to enter the site, will have no option but to park on Bearsted Road, adding to the traffic chaos. Adjacent schools at Grove Green and Bearsted have numerous residential roads surrounding them on which parents park. This school does not have this facility.

Pedestrian Safety

The existing and proposed footpaths are inherently dangerous due to being of narrow width, as little as 1.4m wide and are alongside an extremely busy road. Footpaths are discontinuous necessitating frequent crossing of the road. Proposed traffic speed restriction do nothing to alleviate this problem.

The added proposal of one of the three pedestrian crossings being controlled, i.e. traffic lights, still leaves two uncontrolled but, equally importantly, would increase the traffic flow problem, which seems to have been entirely overlooked/ignored.

On the one hand the nature reserve can be relocated, but access from Gidds Pond Road is not available. Why is this so?

These are some of the more obvious reasons why this facility is not practical at this location and the application should, therefore, be refused unreservedly.

Bearsted Parish Council