

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 10.00 AM

Agenda Item
No.

1

EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROPOSED APPLICATION FOR CONVERSION OF EXISTING GYM BUILDING TO CREATE EXTRA FLOOR SPACE FOR A SIXTH FORM CENTRE AT THE WARWICK ROAD SITE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A SPORTS CENTRE, ALL WEATHER PITCH, TENNIS/NETBALL COURTS, CAR PARK, CYCLE PARKING, VEHICULAR ACCESS, DRAINAGE AND ACOUSTIC FENCING AT THE BELDAMS LANE SITE AT HERTS & ESSEX SCHOOL, WARWICK ROAD, BISHOP'S STORTFORD, CM23 5NJ.

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

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Local Member: John Wyllie, Bishop's Stortford East

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider application PL\0850\17 (CC0492), for proposed conversion of existing gym building to create extra floor space for a sixth form centre at the Warwick Road site and construction of a sports centre, all weather pitch, tennis/netball courts, car park, cycle parking, vehicular access, drainage and acoustic fencing at Beldams Lane site at Herts & Essex School, Warwick Road, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5NJ.

2 Summary

2.1 Herts & Essex School is a 5.6FE secondary school located on Warwick Road, Bishops Stortford. It is currently oversubscribed and is proposing to expand to a 6FE school.

2.2 The application is composed of two sites:

- The Warwick Road site which is where the main school buildings are and changes to the existing gym building are proposed.
- The Beldams Lane site which is currently used as grassed playing pitches where it is proposed to construct a sports centre, all weather pitch, tennis/netball courts, car park, vehicular access and flood lighting.

2.3 There are currently 1,225 pupils at the school and it is proposed that this would increase to 1,350 pupils and 5 additional staff members.

2.4 The proposed development would create 2,824 square metres of new

floor space. Construction for the development would begin in October 2017, providing the facilities for September 2018.

2.5 There is an additional application to create the existing playing pitches at land at Bowling Lane. This land however lies just across the county boundary in Essex and falls to be determined by Uttlesford District Council, and is not the subject of this application.

2.6 The key planning issues in consideration of this application are:

- Need for development
- Design and appearance
- Hours of operation
- Transport
- Community Use
- Landscape
- Drainage
- Noise
- Air quality
- Lighting
- Ecology

2.7 The report concludes that the Chief Executive and Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following THIRTY conditions: -

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Construction Management Plan
4. Lighting (1)
5. Lighting (2)
6. Contamination
7. Noise (1)
8. Noise (2)
9. Noise (3)
10. Highways – Beldams Lane
11. Highways – Sixth Form Centre
12. Highways – Warwick Road
13. Highways – School Travel Plan
14. Highways – Parking Management Plan
15. Highways – Coaches & HGVs
16. Flood & Drainage (1)
17. Flood & Drainage (2)
18. Flood & Drainage – SuDS management and maintenance
19. Landscaping – Detailed Landscaping Plan
20. Landscaping – Retained Trees and Hedges
21. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (1)
22. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
23. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (3)
24. Sporting Requirements – Netball/Tennis Court specifications

- 25. Sporting Requirements – Community Use Agreement
- 26. Sporting Requirements – Management & Maintenance Scheme
- 27. Sporting Requirements – Phasing Plan
- 28. Sporting Requirements – Hockey Goals
- 29. Hours of Operation
- 30. Hours of Operation – Personnel and Floodlighting

3 The Site and Local Area

- 3.1 The Warwick Road site is situated in a residential area of Bishops Stortford just to the east of the town centre, approximately 300m from the Hockerill junction and covers an area of 2.52ha. The site is used as the main school campus with numerous buildings for educational use. Warwick Road runs northward from its junction with London Road. The railway station is opposite this junction just over 400m from the school and the bus station is close by, just over 600m from the school.
- 3.2 The Beldams Lane site is situated in a predominately residential area, with agricultural use to the south side of the site, approximately 330m to the south east of the Warwick Road site and covers an area of 4.23ha. The site is currently used as grassed playing pitches for summer use by the school. The site is adjacent to the county boundary with Essex.
- 3.3 The western and eastern boundaries of the Beldams Lane site border residential development. The northern boundary adjoins a footpath and cycleway and just beyond is the Herts and Essex Hospital. The southern boundary is formed by Beldams Lane; opposite is a small collection of houses, the bowling club and cricket club and open agricultural fields. The county boundary with Essex is formed by southern highway boundary of Beldams Lane.
- 3.4 The Warwick Road site is partially covered by a Conservation Area, while the Beldams Lane site has several Tree Protection Orders (TPOs). There are no other environmental designations which cover either site.

4 The Proposal

- 4.1 The Warwick Road site will see the conversion of the existing gym into a dedicated sixth form centre with the creation of additional floor space. The existing swimming pool will remain. There will be 210m² of new floor space created to provide for the sixth form centre. The internal arrangement of the sixth form centre provides an informal social area on the ground floor with eating area. A new mezzanine floor is proposed to provide a study centre comprising an IT suite accessed via a new staircase.
- 4.2 The only external change proposed on the Warwick Road site is on the southern elevation. The existing brickwork would be removed and this would be replaced with glass curtain walling and spandrel panels. There will be a small extra section added to this southern elevation, which will provide the new entrance to the building.

- 4.3 The Beldams Lane site will see the construction of a sports centre, all-weather pitch, tennis/netball courts, car park, cycle parking, vehicular access, drainage, flood lighting and acoustic fencing. The main sports centre building is to be located in the centre of the site, with the all-weather pitch located to the north, and car parking and tennis/netball courts located to the south of the building.
- 4.4 On the ground floor, the sports centre will accommodate a four court sports hall for volleyball, badminton, basketball and netball. Adjoining the sports hall on the ground floor would be the main reception, classroom space, staff room, and wet and dry changing facilities. The foyer will accommodate a seating area and reception office. On the first floor there will be a Dojo space (judo practice area) (with a viewing/seating area, storage, community conference area, a balcony and a bar/kitchen area.
- 4.5 The sports centre building will be two storeys, 11.2m in height, measuring 52.9m east-west and 35.1m north-south providing 2,587m² (gross external area) of new floor space, it will be constructed from ligancite blockwork on the lower half and trespa panelling on the top half with a pitched roof. The all-weather pitch will measure 91.4m north-south by 55m east-west and will be of 2G construction with flood lighting. The proposed tennis/netball courts will comprise six 21.35m x 36.6m courts constructed from tarmacadam with flood lighting.
- 4.6 The proposed acoustic fence will be on the northern and eastern edges of the all-weather pitch and would be of a dark brown, wooden construction at a height of 2.5m
- 4.7 Vehicular access will be established from Beldams Lane onto the site. The car park will have 58 car parking spaces, 3 of which will be disabled spaces and 100 additional overflow spaces on two areas of reinforced grasscrete construction, 5 of these would be disabled spaces.
- 4.8 Three trees will be removed as part of this application, one is to be removed to allow the new access to be constructed and the other two trees are considered as no longer safe. Sixteen trees will be planted as part of this application, the majority within the proposed car park but also on the boundaries of the Beldams Lane site to provide screening.
- 4.9 Provision has been made for 10 cycle spaces on the Beldams Lane site; however should cycling demand increase for more cycle spaces can be provided. A review of the subsequent demand for cycle spaces should be included in the School Travel Plan.
- 4.10 The walking distance between the Warwick Road site to the proposed Beldams Lane sports centre is approximately 11 minutes. The walking distance from the Beldams Lane sports centre and the proposed playing fields at Bowling Lane is 4 minutes. It is proposed that students would either begin their day at the Beldams Lane sports centre when they have PE lessons or would walk to the site at break or lunch times. PE lessons would only start at these times and would be double lessons, this will

maximise the curriculum time for PE and minimise the impact of lost teaching time due to walking between the sites.

4.11 The Beldams Lane facilities will be used by Herts and Essex school for the delivery of physical education. There will also be community use of the facilities. It is proposed the usage would include opening of the facilities;

- Monday – Thursday 9am – 10pm for indoor and outdoor activities
- Friday 9am – 11pm for indoor and outdoor activities
- Saturday 9am – 7pm for outdoor, 9am – 11pm for indoor, and
- Sunday 9am – 5pm for outdoor and 9am – 8pm for indoor.

Community use would only be available outside of school hours.

4.12 It is proposed that the sports clubs of Bishops Stortford Hockey Club, Bishops Stortford Judo Club and the Hawks and Crosskeys Netball Clubs would be partner organisations and would use the facilities.

5 Policy Considerations

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- Section 4 Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 7 Requiring Good Design
- Section 8 Promoting Healthy Communities
- Section 10 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flood and Coastal Change
- Section 11 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

5.2 East Herts Local Plan Second Review (April 2007) (Saved Policies)

- Policy LRC1 – Sport and Recreation Facilities
- Policy LRC2 – Joint Provision and Dual Use
- Policy SD1 – Making Development More Sustainable
- Policy SD2 – Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy TR1 – Traffic Reduction in New Developments
- Policy TR2 – Access to New Developments
- Policy TR3 – Transport Assessments
- Policy TR4 – Travel Plans
- Policy TR7 – Car Parking – Standards
- Policy TR12 – Cycle Routes
- Policy TR13 – Cycling
- Policy TR17 – Traffic Calming
- Policy ENV1 – Design and Environmental Quality
- Policy ENV2 – Landscaping
- Policy ENV3 – Planning Out Crime
- Policy ENV4 – Access for Disabled People

- Policy ENV10 – Planting New Trees
- Policy ENV11 – Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
- Policy ENV16 – Protected Species
- Policy ENV17 – Wildlife Habitats
- Policy ENV18 – Water Environment
- Policy ENV20 – Groundwater Protection
- Policy ENV21 – Surface Water Drainage
- Policy ENV23 – Light Pollution and Floodlighting
- Policy ENV24 – Noise Generating Development
- Policy ENV27 – Air Quality
- Policy BH1 – Archaeology and New Development
- Policy BH2 – Archaeological Evaluations and Assessments
- Policy BH3 – Archaeological Conditions and Agreements
- Policy BH5 – Extensions and Alterations to Unlisted Buildings in Conservations Areas

5.3 All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2032

- Policy HDP3 – Design Standards
- Policy GIP1 – Local Green Spaces and Other Green Areas
- Policy GIP4 – Protect Wildlife and Increase Biodiversity
- Policy GIP7 – Flood Mitigation
- Policy TP1 – Tackling Traffic Congestion
- Policy TP3 – Create Walking and Cycle Friendly Neighbourhoods
- Policy TP4 – Develop a Connected Town for Pedestrians and Cyclists
- Policy TP5 – Better Bus Travel
- Policy TP7 – Cycle Parking
- Policy EP2 – New Secondary School Places
- Policy EP6 – High Quality Design
- Policy EP7 – Adult, Vocational Education and Community Use
- Policy SLCP1 – Provision of Outdoor Sporting and Leisure Facilities
- Policy SLCP2 – Development or Expansion of Multi-purpose Facilities
- Policy SLCP3 – Development and Enhancement of Specified Facilities

5.4 Emerging East Herts District Plan Pre-Submission

- Policy DES2 – Landscaping
- Policy DES3 – Design of Development
- Policy DES4 – Crime and Security
- Policy TRA1 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy TRA2 – Safe and Sustainable Highway Access Arrangements and Mitigation
- Policy TRA3 – Vehicle Parking Provision

- Policy CFLR1 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- Policy CFLR8 – Loss of Community Facilities
- Policy CFLR10 – Education
- Policy NE2 – Sites of Nature Conservation Interest
- Policy NE3 – Species and Habitats
- Policy HA2 – Non-designated Heritage Assets
- Policy HA3 – Archaeology
- Policy CC1 – Climate Change Adaption
- Policy CC2 – Climate Change Mitigation
- Policy WAT4 – Efficient Use of Water Resources
- Policy WAT5 – Sustainable Drainage
- Policy WAT6 – Wastewater Infrastructure
- Policy EQ2 – Noise Pollution
- Policy EQ3 – Light Pollution

6 Consultations & Representations

- 6.1 East Herts District Council: Has not yet responded at time of drafting report.
- 6.2 Environment Health at East Herts: No comments to be made regarding the conversion of the current gym for a sixth form centre.

Raised concerns in respect of the original noise assessment. This was because the noise survey did not include readings for the weekend and the EHO was concerned that a quieter noise climate may exist and this needed to be taken into account. Further noise readings were taken, submitted and forwarded to EHDC. The EHO also noted concerns about the lighting assessment and further details should be submitted. Following consideration of the additional noise survey information, the EHO confirmed that there were no objections to the proposal subject to conditions relating to a construction management plan, contaminated land, further details of lighting and a noise condition.

- 6.3 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority: does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:
- 1) Before the development is brought into use details of the proposed access onto Beldams Lane and the alterations to existing traffic calming features as shown in principle on Drawing No ST-2550-14-A and St-2550-08-D are to be submitted for approval by the County Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.
 - 2) Before the new sixth form centre is brought into use the parking on the Beldams Lane Sports Centre site shall be available for use.
 - 3) Before the development is brought into use details of the proposed improvements in Warwick Road as shown in principle on Drawing No

ST-2550-09-B are to be submitted for approval by the County Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.

4) Within six months of the new school arrangements being brought into use the existing School Travel Plan shall be reviewed and prepared to current Hertfordshire County Council's criteria, submitted for approval and implemented in full throughout the life of the school.

5) During construction the site shall be managed in accordance with the Construction Management Plan accompanying the application.

6) The submitted Parking Management Plan shall be implemented in full throughout the life of the school.

6.4 Hertfordshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority: recommended the following conditions:

1) The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment - Beldams Lane rev 1-14/08/17 prepared by Stomor and the following mitigation measures as detailed within the above mentioned report.

2) The scheme must provide sufficient source control and storage to avoid flooding within the site and restrict the runoff from the site to 5l/s during all storms up to and including the 1 in 100 year storm event + 40% allowance for climate change.

3) Adequate management treatment train is to be provided by permeable pavement, swales, filter drains and detention basins to ensure water quality as shown on the Existing & Proposed impermeable area No. 2154SK004.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

2) No development shall take place until a full final detailed drainage strategy based on the principles agreed has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the viability of the scheme and confirm which option will be implemented.

It should then include:

- Formal permission(s) to connect discharge point(s) into open ditch or sewer network
- Engineering details of all the SuDS feature should be provided and in line with The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C-753)

3) Upon completion of the drainage works an updated management and maintenance plan for the all the SuDS features and structure must be submitted and shall include arrangements for adoption and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

- 6.5 Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Officer: The proposed tree planting is welcomed, however, the proposed quantity and density of new planting across the site is not deemed sufficient to deliver adequate landscape, visual, or biodiversity enhancements. A tree protection plan and method statement is required to show how existing trees and areas for new planting will be protected.

A landscape scheme is required and should be a fully integrated aspect of the development proposals, not an afterthought. Structural tree and shrub planting should help define key access points, routes and spaces.

There is concern for the layout of key pedestrian routes, and the absence of direct hard surfaced pedestrian routes between key areas. For example there is no direct hard surfaced path between the disabled car park and the main entrance to the sports centre, wheelchair users are forced to cross a grassed area. Similarly, there are no direct hard surfaced paths to the tennis/netball courts, users are forced to cross grass areas resulting in trampling, erosion etc.

Efficient pedestrian access and circulation is vital, paths should reflect important desire lines wherever possible, and provide direct hard surfaced routes between key areas.

There is concern for the large areas of proposed Grasscrete. Grasscrete is generally suitable for use in areas that are subject to very occasional or seasonal traffic, in more rural settings. More frequent use can result in grass erosion and the degradation of modules, resulting in costly maintenance. There is particular concern for the use of Grasscrete to the overflow parking alongside the main access route and disabled parking area. These spaces are the closest to the sports hall and the all-weather hockey pitch and are therefore likely to be heavily used for parking, or as a drop off/ pick up point, at all times. The removal of Grasscrete areas would enable a more integrated approach to the car park layout and landscape scheme.

Overall the proposed development does not provide adequate enhancements to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development. In addition it does not meet the landscape objectives as set out in the submitted Planning Design and Access Statement in particular with regards the objectives to 'Provide visual breaks and soft setting for the car park with the introduction of additional landscaping,' and 'Relieve the visual impact of the building by additional planting where required.' It is strongly advised that a Landscape Architect should be engaged to produce an integrated landscape

scheme and structural planting plan, and address the outstanding matters as discussed above. A tree protection plan and method statement is also required.

- 6.6 Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment: The School site on Warwick Road lies east, and immediately south of (and abutting) Area of Archaeological Significance No.114 as identified in the Local Plan. The area denotes the historic core of the town of Bishop's Stortford. The school buildings on the site range in date from 1910 to the 1970s, and as well as the significant early 20th century structures present, they include several 1950s and 1960s school buildings constructed by Hertfordshire County Council as part of the Council's now famous post World War II school building programme. The existing gym building appears to be the remaining part of a science block constructed in the late 1950s and as such, is a building of architectural interest.

The site of the proposed sports centre, and associated sports facilities, parking, and new access (etc.) was the subject of an archaeological geophysical survey, and a field evaluation of very limited extent in 2007 and 2008 (only one trial trench was excavated, due to the difficulty of investigating an area in use as sports fields). This latter investigation recorded several features which may be archaeological in origin, but they contained no dating evidence and their function is uncertain. The evaluation therefore demonstrated that archaeological remains may be present within the development area, but it was not possible to establish their significance or extent.

In addition, there is evidence of later prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity known from the vicinity, and the topography of the Beldams Lane site would be favourable to settlement. The importance of this latter factor has been demonstrated by archaeological evaluations at several sites in Bishop's Stortford, where very substantial archaeology has been revealed on land on which no archaeological remains were previously known (Bishop's Stortford North, Land south of Hadham Road, Land south of Whittington Way, etc.)

Therefore it is recommended the following conditions are attached:

A) No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
2. The programme for post investigation assessment
3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation

5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

B) The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition **(A)**

C) The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition **(A)** and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

- 6.7 Hertfordshire County Council Ecology: No objection subject to conditions.

The conversion of the gym would have no ecological implications and the Beldams Lane site is intensively managed amenity grassland used for sports pitches, this would limit the ecological interest of the site. The grassland was considered to be species-poor, dominated by rye and bent grasses and of little or no intrinsic interest. The surrounding hedgerows were relatively species-poor and heavily clipped, however I consider they remain of value at the site level. The planted trees enhance the ecology within the site but are of limited value in themselves given their age and condition.

The effects of floodlighting should be kept to a minimum for biodiversity and visual amenity reasons.

I have no reason to object to this assessment, with recommendation for conditions relating to floodlighting and landscaping.

- 6.8 Sport England: raises no objection to this application subject to the following conditions being imposed:

1) No development shall commence until details of the netball/tennis courts specifications including the dimensions, surfacing, fencing and line markings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The netball/tennis courts shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.

2) Before the sports facilities on the Beldams Lane site hereby permitted are brought into use, a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement provided to the Local Planning Authority. The

agreement shall apply to the sports hall, dojo/activity studio, artificial grass pitch, netball/tennis courts, playing fields and ancillary facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities. The sports facilities shall not be used at any time other than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.

3) Before the sports facilities on the Beldams Lane site hereby permitted are brought into use, a Management and Maintenance Scheme for the facilities including management responsibilities, management committee arrangements, agreements with key community users, maintenance details and a mechanism for review shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the sports centre.

4) No development shall commence until details for the phasing of the development hereby permitted and the replacement playing fields to the south of Bowling Lane have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

6.9 Bishop's Stortford Town Council: Although Bishop's Stortford Town Council acknowledges that the town needs more sports facilities; it does have some reservations about the suitability of the site. A letter has been received from Haymeads Residents Association objecting to the application on a number of grounds, primarily traffic and noise. Cllr Wyllie advised that objections have been from residents of Haymeads Lane and Beldams Lane. The main concern is traffic, especially coaches going into Haymeads Lane. It was noted that there would need to be a traffic flow system introduced preventing traffic from turning right into the site. Parking will also be an issue to prevent on-street parking in Beldams Lane. A pedestrian crossing will be required for children crossing a very busy road used as a rat-run. There was agreement that there should generally be a 9pm closing time with a 10pm car park closure although a limited number of later nights would be permissible on occasion. Cars leaving at the same time will be an issue for local residents. The committee voiced further concern about sound and light pollution so downlights will be needed. Councillor Campbell asked for it to be noted that there is also a question of security to fencing and gates to the site.

6.10 Bishop's Stortford Civic Foundation: In conclusion, an application such as this requires a balance to be reached between the loss of amenity and increased noise, light pollution and disturbance from which the local

residents will undoubtedly suffer, and the benefits that the wider community of Bishop's Stortford will be able to enjoy should this development go ahead. While we are sympathetic to the aspirations of the school, we do not feel that enough consideration has been given to the disbenefits which the local residents will suffer. We have made some suggestions about restrictions on the use of the new facilities and improvements to the suggested noise barrier. We are also sceptical about the traffic impacts which have been modelled and whether adequate mitigation has been proposed. And we believe that the traffic impacts of any possible expansion to 8 FE should be modelled now, so that if they are unacceptable, further incremental growth options can be ruled out. Until these concerns have been addressed we do not feel able to support this application in its present form.

6.11 Local Member: has requested that the application be brought before the Development Control Committee to be determined.

6.12 Neighbours / Publicity: Publicity for this application was as follows:

4 site notices were erected on the main vehicular access and pedestrian access on 14 July 2017. An advert was also placed in the Herts and Essex Observer on Thursday 20 July 2017.

A total of 1331 properties were consulted and 70 responses have been received from individual residents. There have been 54 objections and 16 supporting letters.

The concerns raised in these representations include:

- Increased traffic impact on Warwick Road from parents dropping off children
- Increased damage to Warwick Road, which has to be covered by the Maintenance Association
- Increased traffic impact on the Hockerill Junction, which is already significant
- Increased traffic impact on Beldams Lane, which is already an issue due to on-street parking and being used as a 'rat-run'
- Increased damage to roads surrounding the site particularly Linkside Road
- Increased traffic impact on the Nags Head junction, which cannot cope with existing levels of traffic
- Lack of car parking spaces proposed with the development would result in significant on-street parking on Beldams Lane and surrounding roads
- The proposed hours of use are completely unreasonable and at the very minimum should be limited to 9pm
- The length of the construction period will cause disruption for a significant amount of time
- Loss of a green space which is used by dog walkers and children, with no other alternatives

- The size of the facility proposed is far in excess of what the site is capable of hosting
- The noise impact from vehicles and sports users would be excessive and at night time would conflict with the WHO limits for undisturbed sleep
- The increase in traffic levels would make it difficult for emergency vehicles to access the site and surrounding properties
- The inclusion of a bar is not necessary at a facility like this and would encourage drunken and disorderly behaviour
- The site could encourage anti-social behaviour within the car park
- The site should have security present and gates should be locked outside of use
- There would be a loss of ecology including foxes, birds and bats
- The field currently acts as a significant flood plain and without it houses in the vicinity could flood
- The balance between school use and community use is only 23% / 77% showing it is predominately for community and club use
- The time to walk from Warwick Road to Beldams Lane and then Bowling Lane is too long and would reduce physical education time significantly
- There has been a distinct lack of community involvement in the creation of these plans and concerns have not been taken on board by the developer
- The school has not proven a definitive need for expansion
- There are safety concerns for children and pedestrians near the site and crossing from Warwick Road to Beldams Lane and Beldams Lane to Bowling Lane
- The proposal will remove trees which have significant biodiversity value
- The proposal will plant trees which could cause problems for property with roots and overshadowing
- There are trees with Tree Protection Order on the site
- The development is inappropriate in the Green Belt
- Health impact particularly during construction due to the release of dust and spores from disturbed soil
- Air pollution impact from increased vehicles on Beldams Lane and parking on the site
- Overall environmental impact from the development

The letters of support raised the following points:

- Significantly increase the opportunity for sporting use and options for people to participate in sport
- The facility will help to diversify the sports on offer in Bishop's Stortford
- Provide facilities for sporting clubs within Bishop's Stortford who either do not have appropriate facilities or require further space
- The development will provide facilities which are of an incredibly high standard

- The facility will offer the opportunity for socially inclusive sports with the encouragement of participation from girls, elderly users and disabled users
- The facility is in a good location which help to balance the community sporting provision in Bishop's Stortford
- Herts and Essex is a leading school and should be expanded
- This expansion will provide the school with facilities which match its achievements

7 Planning Issues

7.1 The principal planning issues to be taken into account in determining this application are:

- Need for development
- Design and appearance
- Hours of operation
- Transport
- Community Use
- Landscape
- Drainage
- Noise
- Lighting
- Ecology
- Archaeology
- Open space

Need for Development

7.2 Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools. Policy LRC1 of the East Herts Local Plan requires that proposal which will result in loss of public or private, indoor or outdoor, sports, recreation and open space facilities, or school playing fields will be refused unless a suitable alternative facilities are provided in the locality which are at least equivalent to the ones that would be lost or it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed.

7.3 Policies SLCP1, SLCP2 and SLCP3 of the All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley Neighbourhood Plan all support the provision of outdoor and multi-purpose sporting and leisure facilities with specific reference to provision to shared use which must be considered in any such

development and proposals by educational establishments to construct or expand sports and leisure facilities with the specific intention of making such facilities available for use by all the community will be supported provided they do not conflict with other planning policies. Further, Policy EP2 states that proposal for developments which create new secondary school places to serve new developments will be welcomed.

- 7.4 Herts & Essex School currently operates as a 5.6FE school and is oversubscribed with 1,225 pupils. A report to the Enterprise and Education and Skills Cabinet in June 2016 agreed that the county council would seek to acquire additional land to the south of Bowling Lane which would enable the school to expand to 6FE. A BB103 assessment was subsequently completed in January 2017 which confirmed the school did not have sufficient current land to meet the requirements of the BB103 assessment for its existing capacity or potential expanded capacity.
- 7.5 The current facilities at Herts & Essex School are acknowledged as offering a limited indoor and outdoor PE provision with the current gym being relatively small and the current playing fields have drainage issues with use being limited mainly to the summer.
- 7.6 To accommodate for the additional 125 pupils, more classroom space needs to be made available within the Warwick Road site. This classroom space is currently occupied by sixth formers, who do not have a dedicated area to themselves. Therefore, the existing gym will be converted to provide space for the sixth formers and release the required classroom space for the new pupils. This then creates the need for re-provision of indoor sporting facilities with the conversion of the gym on the Warwick Road site into a dedicated sixth form centre.
- 7.7 As Policy LRC1 requires the replacement of any lost sports facilities, this necessitates the construction of the proposed gym at Beldams Lane. Furthermore this then also necessitates the replacement of the grassed playing pitches with the proposal at Bowling Lane.
- 7.8 The proposed facilities would be partnered by several Bishop's Stortford sports clubs including Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club, Bishop's Stortford Judo Club, and the Hawks and the Crosskeys Netball Clubs. All of these sports clubs are looking to expand their sporting provision and offer opportunities for informal pay and play sessions, increased older user participation and increased disabled user participation. This facility would therefore meet the need of all of these clubs, in compliance with extant planning policy.
- 7.9 There have been suggestions that there is not a requirement for the school to expand due to the impending development of Bishop's Stortford North, which will include a new secondary school. The current application to address an existing shortfall in capacity; any new school at Bishop Stortford North will be required to serve future need associated

with that residential expansion, in addition to the existing shortfall.

- 7.10 The majority of supporting representations for this application have made reference to the need to expand the current sporting provision within Bishop's Stortford to offer a more diverse option of available sports to more people and bring an expansion to a leading school in the area.
- 7.11 Overall it is considered that the need for the expansion has been demonstrated and is considered to be compliant with Paragraph 72 of the NPPF, Policy LRC1 (Sport and Recreation Facilities) of the East Herts Plan and Policies SLCP 1 (Provision of outdoor sporting and leisure facilities) SLCP2 (Development or expansion of multi-purpose facilities) SLCP 3 (Development and enhancement of specified facilities) and Policy EN2 (New secondary school places) of the All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley Neighbourhood Plan.

Design and Appearance

- 7.12 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 60 states planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.
- 7.13 Policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan requires all development to be a high standard of design to reflect local distinctiveness and demonstrate compatibility with the structure and layout of the surrounding area, and related well to the massive and height of the surrounding townscape.
- 7.14 Policies HDP3 and EP6 of the Neighbourhood Plan also specify requirements for designs which meet clear technical design standards and aesthetic standards too.
- 7.15 The changes to the existing gym on the Warwick Road site are predominately internal changes, with the only external change occurring on the south side of the building. The change will see an existing blue concrete block wall be replaced with glass curtain walling and spandrel panels. While this change is minimal it is considered it offers an improvement on the existing design aesthetic and would fit the character of the surrounding buildings. Further, it is not in conflict with Policy BH5 as the existing gym building is outside of the Conservation Area.
- 7.16 The proposed construction on the Beldams Lane site of a sports centre, all weather pitch, tennis/netball courts, car park, cycle parking, vehicular access, drainage and acoustic fencing offers a significantly different visual appearance to the current grassed playing pitches. The sports

centre building will be two storeys, 11.2m in height, measuring 52.9m east-west and 35.1m north-south providing 2,587m² of new floor space, it will be constructed from ligancite blockwork on the lower half and trespa panelling on the top half with a pitched roof. The all-weather pitch will measure 91.4m north-south by 55m east-west and will be of 2G construction with flood lighting. The proposed tennis/netball courts will comprise six 21.35m x 36.6m courts constructed from tarmacadam with flood lighting.

- 7.17 The overall aesthetic design of the proposed sports centre, while being a relatively standard design, is considered to be of a high quality, contemporary design which does not contradict the surrounding design aesthetic. While the height of the building is higher than surrounding residential buildings, the roof has been pitched with a dual aspect to provide a break to the massing. Overall the building will not be over imposing or dominate the surroundings. The playing pitches and car parking construction do also offer a change from the existing situation; however they do retain an overall open aesthetic.
- 7.18 It has been noted the proposed acoustic fence is not particularly aesthetically pleasing, however it is required to meet requirements in terms of noise impact. It is recommended that this element of the application is revisited as part of the Landscaping Scheme, which is to be required by condition should planning permission be granted.

Hours of Operation

- 7.19 The hours of operation proposed within the application have raised concerns; these can be seen in the third party objections, and are also raised by other consultees. The hours of use need to provide a balance between benefits of providing sports provision and community use, and the amenity of residents. The proposed hours of use are split between the outdoor activities, use of the all-weather hockey pitch and the tennis/netball courts and the indoor facilities including sports courts and the judo facility. The school have reconsidered the times proposed in the original application and are now proposing the following hours, the table below summarises the application times and the proposed amendments:

Day	Location	Application times	Amended proposal
Mon-Thursday	indoor	9am-11:00pm	10:00pm
Mon-Thursday	outdoor	9am-11:00pm	9:00pm
Friday	indoor	9am-11:00pm	11:30pm

Friday	outdoor	9am-11:00pm	9:00pm
Saturday	indoor	9am-7:00pm	11:30pm
Saturday	outdoor	9am-11:00pm	9:00pm
Sunday	indoor	9am-5:00pm	8:00pm
Sunday	outdoor	9am-8:00pm	7:00pm

7.20 The County Council does not have any particular standards in respect of such facilities and none are outlined in EHDC Local Plan. The County Council did consider times for a facility at the Marriott's and Lonsdale school which is a sports specialist college. The facility included an all-weather sport pitch for football; that planning permission limited the hours of use of the all-weather pitch to Monday-Friday 9:00pm, Saturday 4:00pm and Sunday 1:00pm. The sporting facility was not as large as proposed at Beldams Lane and it is proposed that the latest time of opening should be; Monday to Saturday, outdoor and indoor, 10:00pm, and Sunday indoor 8:00pm and 7:00pm

Transport

7.21 The proposals relate to two different sites, Warwick Road and Beldams Lane.

7.22 The intention is to increase the school size from 5.6FE to 6FE school, with an increase in pupil numbers from 1,225 to 1,350. This would mean an increase in pupils crossing Warwick Road, a raised crossing is proposed (at the point of the main pedestrian access to the school) with minor narrowing on each side of the road. A pedestrian crossing is situated on London Road and close to the junction with Warwick Road. Improvements are also identified here as high vegetation restricts visibility. The Highways Authority recommends that both of these improvements are implemented with a planning condition to secure their being carried out.

7.23 The school has a total of 126 spaces available to cater for staff and visitor parking on the Warwick Road site. The car parking standards for EHDC Local Plan indicate that 116 places are required at the Warwick road site. Further a survey indicates a total of 114 staff are expected to travel to school by car.

7.24 It is proposed to remove permission for sixth form pupils to park on the Warwick Road site, this would free up 23 spaces. The proposal is to permit sixth formers to use the Beldams Lane site. A parking management plan has been submitted with the application to ensure that car parking is managed across the school. The Highways Authority propose that conditions are imposed to ensure the parking management

plan is carried out and also that before the new sixth form centre is brought into use the parking at Beldams Lane is made available.

- 7.25 The predicted impact upon Warwick Road is for an increase on two-way flow of 49 movements in the AM and PM peak periods. The Highways Authority considers that the proposal would not have a severe or unacceptable impact upon the operation of the junction between Warwick Road/Crescent Road and London Road.
- 7.26 The proposal at Beldams Lane would have a predicted increase in two-way traffic flows of 30 movements during the AM and PM school peak periods and 52 movements during the network PM peak between 5-6:00pm. The Highway Authority considers that based upon this analysis the proposed development is not considered to have a severe or unacceptable impact upon the operation of junctions between Beldams Lane and Hallingbury Road or Linkside Road.
- 7.27 The Highway Authority notes that some on street parking occurs to the east of the existing parking restrictions near to the western end of Beldams Lane. Due to limitations on the road's width the on street parking can obstruct two-way traffic flow. 35 movements are anticipated during the 1-hour peak period at the western end of Beldams Lane an increase of 3% over existing total traffic flows. The Highway Authority notes that should it prove necessary single or double yellow line road markings could be provided. Further that the parking provision has been designed to minimise overspill.
- 7.28 The predicted need for car parking at Beldams Lane is for 55 standard spaces plus eight disabled spaces and a further 100 overflow spaces. The proposal provides for 58 car parking spaces, 3 of which will be for disabled persons. A further 100 overflow spaces are to be provided which will incorporate 5 disabled spaces.
- 7.29 The Highway Authority concludes in their response that subject to the conditions and mitigation proposed that the proposal would be acceptable.

Community Use

- 7.30 The proposal is that the new sports hall will be made available for community use. Sport England have commented upon the application and require that a community use agreement is formed which will be bring this forward. This is in line with their approach to the use of playing fields for development, that they would wish to see an improved sports provision where existing playing fields are subject to development. This is supported by EHDC Local Plan Policy LRC1.
- 7.31 EHDC Local Plan also includes Policy LRC2, which supports the dual use of and joint provision of educational and leisure activities.

Landscape

7.32 The proposal at Beldams Lane would involve the loss of 3 trees. One is to be removed to help form the new access onto Beldams Lane and the other two are to be removed for safety reasons. The development at Beldams Lane includes the planting of 16 new trees. The advice of the Landscape Officer is that these proposals should be reviewed and a landscape scheme should be required by condition. Any landscape scheme must address the concerns highlighted by the Landscape Officer and provide an improved proposal that would help mitigate landscape impacts and integrate the proposal into its surrounding.

Flood and Drainage

7.33 The proposal is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA should be carried out in full and further details are required, these details can be secured by use of conditions.

Noise

- 7.34 The proposal was accompanied by a noise report. The report considers the suitability of the site for the proposed use and also the impacts that the proposed use would have upon surrounding land uses.
- 7.35 The site exceeds the values for outdoor teaching space but this varies across the site, the report considers that the northern area of the site is most likely to be suitable for teaching. The noise environment is affected by aircraft noise and so mitigation for this would not be effective at the site.
- 7.36 The noise assessment considers the impact that the proposal may have upon surrounding properties. The assessment includes looking at the noise that is likely to be produced by the outdoor play facilities and comparing this to the existing noise levels as surveyed at the site. The existing noise levels included an updated survey of levels at the weekend following the initial consultation response of the East Herts District Council Environmental Health Officer. The report noted that the proposal, without mitigation, would be likely to lead to changes to the noise for closest residential properties and which would lead to conflict with planning policy on noise. Mitigation is therefore proposed, this includes the provision of a 2.5m high acoustic fence to the north and east of the proposed artificial grass pitch, rubber back boards for the goals and hockey pitch and resilient mountings for fencing. The noise report concludes that the noise emissions are considered to meet the requirements of policy ENV 24 of EHDC local Plan. The Environmental Health Officer considered the noise report and also the further noise survey work that was submitted and advised that subject to conditions to cover a construction management plan and a noise condition that he did

not object to the proposal.

Lighting

7.37 The proposal includes artificial lighting for the outdoor play areas i.e. the all-weather hockey pitch and the tennis/netball pitches. The planning application was accompanied by lighting assessment which looked at the lighting impact. The Environmental health officer to East Herts District Council did not object to the lighting plan. The County council took further advice in respect of the lighting assessment and it is considered that the details require a further assessment to be made to ensure that the proposal is acceptable. A condition should be imposed upon any planning permission requiring further details of lighting to be submitted.

Ecology

7.38 The proposal at the Warwick Road site would not give rise to ecological impacts, as the changes are largely limited to an internal reconfiguration of the existing space. In respect of the Beldams Lane site, it is considered that the sports pitches and associated grassland are not likely to be of interest ecologically. The proposal should not have an adverse impact upon ecology providing robust conditions in relation to lighting and landscaping are attached to any subsequent planning permission.

Archaeology

7.39 The limited archaeological evaluation shows that archaeological remains may be present and they should be evaluated. A planning condition can secure an appropriate investigation of archaeology.

Loss of open space, sport and recreation facilities

7.40 The proposal for the Beldams Lane site includes the construction of a new sports hall, an all-weather hockey pitch, tennis/netball courts and car parking. The land is currently used as a playing pitch for Herts & Essex School, though the drainage of the pitches currently limits their use, especially during winter. Extant policy says that permission should be refused for development which would result in the loss of playing fields and open space unless suitable alternative arrangements are available. The proposal would improve the sporting facilities at the school by providing an improved gym, an all-weather hockey pitch and new tennis/netball pitches. The facilities would also be made available to the local community through local sports clubs.

7.41 There would be a loss of playing field and this is to be compensated by a new facility in Bowling Lane. The planning application for this is to be considered by Uttlesford District Council later this month and the officer recommendation is that planning permission be granted.

7.42 The overall proposal would comply with EHDC Policy FLR1.

8 Summary

- 8.1 The proposal is to accommodate an increase in pupils at Herts & Essex School; this is needed to meet a growing demand for secondary school places in Bishop's Stortford.
- 8.2 The proposal is divided between three different sites, Warwick Road, Beldams Lane and Bowling Lane. The Bowling Lane proposal is across the county boundary and falls to Uttlesford District Council to determine. The planning application for the Bowling Lane development to be presented to Uttlesford District Council planning committee later this month and is recommended for approval.
- 8.3 The application on the Warwick Road site is for a sixth form centre which would replace the existing gym building. This would free up other class space within the school to accommodate the additional pupils. The proposal would increase the number of pupils at the school from 1,225 to 1,350, with an additional 5 teachers being required. The traffic assessment submitted with the application makes recommendations for changes to mitigate the impact of the proposed increase. The Highways Authority does not object to this proposal subject to planning conditions that would include the provision of a safe crossing for pupils on Warwick Road at the main school entrance, improvements by the Warwick Road/London Road junction, restrictions on sixth form parking at the Warwick Road site via a parking management plan, and an updated school travel plan.
- 8.4 The Beldams Lane proposal is for the existing school playing field to site a new gym, all-weather hockey pitch, tennis/netball courts and car parking. The outdoor sports facilities would be flood lit. A new access would be formed on to Beldams Lane. The sports facilities would be made available for community use via local sports clubs. The application includes proposals to mitigate noise impacts from the sports facilities, tree planting and landscaping. The Highway Authority has assessed the proposals in relation to the Beldams Road site and concludes that they do not object and the proposals would not lead to a severe impact.
- 8.5 The proposal would provide needed places for secondary education, provide improved sport facilities at the school, and allow community use of the improved sports facilities. Subject to conditions (attached to this report at Appendix 1) to mitigate the impacts of the development, planning permission should be granted.
- 8.6 The Chief Executive and Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following THIRTY conditions:
1. Time Limit
 2. Approved Plans
 3. Construction Management Plan

4. Lighting (1)
5. Lighting (2)
6. Contamination
7. Noise (1)
8. Noise (2)
9. Noise (3)
10. Highways – Beldams Lane
11. Highways – Sixth Form Centre
12. Highways – Warwick Road
13. Highways – School Travel Plan
14. Highways – Parking Management Plan
15. Highways – Coaches & HGVs
16. Flood & Drainage (1)
17. Flood & Drainage (2)
18. Flood & Drainage – SuDS management and maintenance
19. Landscaping – Detailed Landscaping Plan
20. Landscaping – Retained Trees and Hedges
21. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (1)
22. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (2)
23. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation (3)
24. Sporting Requirements – Netball/Tennis Court specifications
25. Sporting Requirements – Community Use Agreement
26. Sporting Requirements – Management & Maintenance Scheme
27. Sporting Requirements – Phasing Plan
28. Sporting Requirements – Hockey Goals
29. Hours of Operation
30. Hours of Operation – Personnel and Floodlighting