

I am writing to object to the above application as set out in the Public Notice published in the Bishop's Stortford Independent dated March 18th and which required representations to be made by 8th April 2020. The application in the Public Notice comprised two parts:

1. A reserved matters application covering layout, scale, etc. of a new 6FE secondary school and other matters at Land to the South of Whittington Way, Bishop's Stortford; and
2. Proposed construction of a temporary haul road from St James's Way and Obrey Way to enable construction of the school

I wish to object to both parts of the application – though I note that part 2 was also the subject of a parallel application by HCC (PL/0124/20) and that the temporary haul road from Obrey Way has now been withdrawn from that application. I assume that the temporary haul road from Obrey Way will also now be withdrawn from part 2 of this application but I am still objecting on two other main grounds:

- Prematurity in the light of EHC's requirement for additional information; additional information required for consideration of the related application (3/20/0151/OUT) by HCC for the redevelopment of the existing TBSHS site (BISH6); and changes in deadlines for the availability of PSBR funding as a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic.
- The absence of, need for and the opportunity to incorporate vital transport mitigation measures for London Road / Thorley Street required to mitigate the impact of relocating the TBSHS school.

These are set out in more detail below.

1. Prematurity

I believe the application for consent for the reserved matters pursuant to the outline planning consent (PL/0095/19) HCC granted itself for development of this new school in November 2019 is premature at this time when, since the granting of the Outline consent, there have been significant changes and requirements for additional information and studies for this and related developments by HCC including:

- a) Regarding this application, I note that EHC planning officers commented on 30th March 2020 that "additional information is required in order to approve the reserved matters" regarding fundamental design issues including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. In some cases it was observed that information provided conflicted with planning conditions which HCC itself imposed. I believe this shows unnecessarily hurried preparation of the design and support the Planning Officer's request for additional information.
- b) Regarding the application for the redevelopment of the existing TBSHS site (3/20/0151) – also hurriedly submitted on 30th January 2020 following EHC Council approval of the BISH6 Masterplan on the 29th January - we note that, on 19th March 2020 HCC Highways recommended "refusal of the planning application due to a lack of sufficient information to demonstrate that the development would not have a severe impact on the local highway." The Highways Authority has required that 15 additional areas of information, remodelling and analysis are required before the application can be reconsidered.
- c) Also regarding the application for the redevelopment of the existing TBSHS site, HCC Public Health Services (PHS) have required a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be carried out on air quality as a result of the high traffic generation - and that it should cover the cumulative effect of BSS as well as the redevelopment of the school. I understand this is a requirement of a new HIA policy adopted by HCC in November 2019 which the PHS says is now required before the application is determined.

- d) Finally, we note that the option for a temporary haul road from Obrey Way has now been withdrawn from the application PL/0124/20. While there were a significant number of objections to this option, the “AMENDED PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT” added to the HCC website on 30th March (after the closure date for comments) now says “This planning application previously included a temporary haul road from Obrey Way which was proposed for construction and use prior to the main St James Way haul ... was needed to ensure enabling works could be initiated to ensure funding deadlines from the Department for Education could be met. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Department for Education has now confirmed that the funding deadlines no longer need to be urgently met. As a consequence there is no longer a requirement for a temporary haul road from Obrey Way”

It is therefore now clear that the urgency of all HCC’s school relocation related applications has been driven by the need to drawdown the PSBP funding before end March 2021. I believe this has resulted in hastily prepared and submitted applications and incomplete supporting technical work that is now drawing refusal recommendations and requests for further information. However, the PSBP funding deadline appears to be no longer relevant – and a number of demand and funding uncertainties are emerging including:

- the coronavirus crisis now seems likely to throw into question future PSBP funding and, indeed, all education and all public expenditure budgets going forward.
- house purchase activity has virtually ceased because of social distancing, the supply of mortgages being severely curtailed and construction activity being greatly reduced where not entirely discontinued.

There are therefore a number of important issues which have been identified but the rush to commence works has meant that they have been ignored or given low priority. These could now usefully be addressed during this enforced pause before approving reserved matters and finalising the grant of planning permissions. At the very least, this strengthens the case for improving design standards and reviewing assessments (particularly in terms of transport and health impacts) and mitigation measures of the BISH5 and BISH6 related applications by HCC going through the system at the moment. It is for this reason that I believe the present application is premature and should either be withdrawn or refused in its present form.

2. Transport Impact Mitigation for London Road / Thorley Street

The current application for consent for the reserved matters is made pursuant to the outline planning consent (PL/0095/19) granted in November 2019. The Transport Assessment (TA) carried out for that application relied entirely on the original TA prepared in 2016 by Mayer Brown for Countryside’s hybrid application for the BSS (BISH5) development. The community has consistently expressed a lack of confidence in the results of that TA with regard to transport impacts in the London Road corridor. They therefore welcomed HCC’s appointment of Pell Frischmann (PF) to carry out a new TA in the period March 2019 to January 2020 for the redevelopment of the BISH6 site – also in the London Road corridor – which was presented in support of the school’s application (3/20/0151/OUT) currently under consideration by EHC.

The results of PF’s improved scope and updated modelling now clearly show that the impact of development in the London Road Corridor and Pig Lane is wholly unsustainable – and significantly more so than that forecasted Mayer Brown for the BSS applications. The revised results of the cumulative traffic impact of the BISH6 development together with BSS and other committed developments along London Road show key junction movements at 100 - 250% of capacity and that the network would cease to function at all bringing the southern part of the road system into the town to a standstill in the morning and evening peaks. As noted in 1. above HCC Highways have therefore recommended “refusal of the planning application due to a

lack of sufficient information to demonstrate that the development would not have a severe impact on the local highway.”

In particular the PF TA shows that the worst queues and delays are:

- London Road/Pig Lane junction (the junction closest to the existing TBSHS site) – significantly the worst case which reaches 200-250% of junction overcapacity with delays of up to 30 minutes in the am peak
- an increase of over 500 vehicles in the am peak along Thorley Street – bringing the total predicted traffic through traffic to 1,478 vehicles.

The analysis shows that these traffic flows through London Road and Thorley Street will increase significantly primarily as a result of the access to and from the BSS development being via the new site spine road, St James’ Way and along Thorley Street to the town. The analysis also suggests that this is largely due to a.m. school-based traffic accessing the BSS schools and returning from other school trips around the town with only around 12% of arrivals to the BSS site in the morning peak accessing via St James’s Way by using the bypass directly. The remainder will access the schools (passing the vacated BISH6 site and adding about 1.25 miles to the trip) via London Road, Pig Lane and Thorley Street.

The BISH6 applicant’s TA argues that these problems arise from the permission already granted for BSS - without acknowledging that the relocation of the TBSHS is an integral part of the development and causes much of the additional transport impact. This therefore demands a proper re-evaluation of the BSS TA and clear proposals to mitigate the most severe transport impacts in the London Road Corridor. In particular I believe that HCC should identify and support mitigation measures – both in the current reserved matters and the BISH6 applications - to mitigate the impact of increases in school-based traffic accessing the BSS schools via Thorley Street.

I believe that the current reserved matters application should include mitigation measures for Thorley Street specifically and the London Road corridor in general with the objectives of significantly reducing traffic flows, queues and delays generated by BISH5 and BISH6 southbound and northbound on B1383 through Thorley Street from Whittington Way in am and pm peaks; and prioritising reduction of BSS car-based school trips (outbound and return) in a.m. peak.

To achieve these objectives I believe the current reserved matters application should take the opportunity of delaying resubmission pending the provision of further information on this and the BISH6 applications (see 1(a) to (c) above) to design and test new school access options including:

- Changing the primary access to the BSS site to provide access for car-based school trips to the proposed primary and secondary schools from the north via the (new) Whittington Way roundabout at Bishops Avenue and the northern arm of the BSS spine road rather than from the south via St James’s Way.
- Amending the site layout to provide a combined school’s drop-off and return zone from the northern arm of the BSS spine road at the north-east corner of the schools site.
- Redesigning the light-controlled junction at Whittington Way / London Rd to improve southbound right-turning capacity.
- Maintaining access to school parking areas and provision of (limited) drop-off capacity via St James’s Way and the southern arm of the BSS spine road.
- Remodel the impact of these changes on the key junctions in the London Road corridor to test whether they would meet the stated mitigation objectives and, if so, make proposals for s106 contributions to these off-site mitigation measures.

By focusing most vehicle, cycle and pedestrian access to schools from Whittington Way, I believe these mitigation measures will significantly reduce increases in traffic flow, queues and delays through Thorley Street and reduce the length of the estimated 88% of car-based school trips by a total of over 3km (outbound + return) per trip compared with trips to the existing TBSHS and Thorley Hill schools. This will also reduce associated vehicle emissions from vehicle queues on Thorley Street and improve and expand shared access to schools by car and bus. It would also achieve a significant reduction in “illegal” school drop-offs in the BSS Area A access roads off Whittington Way.

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