

Essential Reference Paper A - LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP

Other Representations:

- 1.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and notification of local residents who had submitted a representation on the 2008 applications.
- 1.2 In total 833 letters of objection have been received including representations from The Open Spaces Society and Bishop's Stortford Rugby Club. A detailed submission and a 26 page document with appendices has been received from The Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation. A petition signed by the residents of Bishop's Stortford objecting to the proposed school site at Whittington Way has also been received, with a total of 2342 signatures. A petition of 512 emails (some with additional comments) from the Civic Federation's online petition has also been received.
- 1.3 Many of the objectors' letters and emails are lengthy and detailed and often refer to national and local plan policy. It is therefore not possible to bring into a report of this nature every comment. The summary below covers the main areas of objection.
- 1.4 Summary of objectors' main points:

Land at Whittington Way, LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP

Green Belt:

- The proposal would be contrary to the adopted Local Development Plan and National Policy.
- The site is not designated to be used in the adopted Local Development Plan.
- The provision of 2No. new schools does not warrant the special circumstances required to build on Green Belt land.
- Building on the site would not respect the character of the area and would result in a loss of open space.
- Building on the land would set a precedent for future development within the Green Belt.
- The Council should look for other suitable sites that aren't within Metropolitan Green Belt in Bishop's Stortford, for example the Hadham Road site that has already been identified as a suitable site.

Educational Need/School Places/Parental Choice:

- There is a concern that the separate single sex schools would merge into one school in the future and become a mixed-sex school.
- There are concerns that the new schools would still not meet the shortfall of secondary school places predicted by the LEA.
- With 2No. schools at one site, there would be an increase in the amount of traffic at the site at one time, leading to congestion in the area.
- To meet the predicted shortfall of places, it has been suggested that a new school should be built at a different site, instead of 2No. larger replacement schools (The Hadham Road site has been suggested).
- Money should be spent on refurbishing and extending the existing schools rather than building new schools.
- The proposed site is not convenient for parents to travel to, particularly compared with the existing school sites which the objectors comment are more accessible and are centrally located.
- Comment that research shows that larger schools do not do as well academically as smaller schools and have concerns that by increasing the sizes of Bishop's Stortford High School and Herts & Essex High School they would follow this 'trend'.
- The proposed schools would not be able to support the influx of people from the proposed housing developments outlined in LPA references 3/10/1009/OP, 3/10/1013/OP, 3/10/1014/OP and 3/10/1015/OP.
- A Campus facilitating 3000 pupils and staff would be too big to manage.
- The existing two smaller schools are high achieving schools. Increasing the sizes of these schools may not result in such achievements.

Traffic and Sustainability:

- The site is not a sustainable option.
- The 'Travel Plan' submitted with the application lacks footpaths and cycle paths which would lead to more parents driving pupils to school.
- These larger schools would expand their catchment areas, leading to pupils from 'further afield' and outside the district and the county attending the schools and resulting in an increase of traffic in the area.

- The site is too remote from the town centre and is not near to any public transport (i.e. bus stops/train stations), unlike the existing school sites which are located more centrally within Bishop's Stortford.
- The town centre would experience an increase in traffic congestion due to the increase in vehicles travelling through Bishop's Stortford to get to the new schools.
- The immediate residential areas, including Thorley, St Michaels Mead, and Twyford Road would be used as cut-throughs/rat runs.
- The proposed new roundabouts near the Whittington Way site would be dangerous to nearby residents and to pupil's safety.
- There is not enough parking on site for parents and staff vehicles/coaches etc, resulting in vehicles parking in the surrounding residential areas.

Aircraft Noise:

There are concerns from objectors that the proposed schools site sits directly below the flight path for traffic taking off from Stansted Airport. Many comments received by the Council outline that noise monitors in the vicinity have shown measurements above the acceptable levels for educational establishments. There are further concerns that the proposed NATS relocation of air traffic routes and the expansion of Stansted Airport would exacerbate the noise.

Martin Peachey, a local resident, a member of the Department for Transport's Aircraft Noise Monitoring Advisory Committee and the technical adviser to the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee on noise and track keeping matters has submitted a substantial Environmental Noise Assessment Report for the proposed schools site at Whittington Way. The report outlines that the applicant's Environmental Statement and The Sharps Redmore Partnership (SRP) report submitted with the application omits criteria that should be provided for an environmental noise assessment for the proposed schools site. He raises further concerns that the report hasn't taken into account the BAA Generation 2 expansion at Stansted Airport or the NATS proposed airspace change, as this will move the most frequently used Stansted departure route closer to the proposed site, which Mr Peachey's assessment report suggests would have a detrimental impact upon Bishop's Stortford. It is also highlighted that the SRP report confirms that the aircraft noise and the ambient noise levels are close to normal limits and in some instances exceed these limits over the proposed schools site.

Other concerns:

- Flooding is more likely to occur due to the existing open spaces/green areas being built upon.
- Building on the site would result in the loss of wildlife and also the felling of protected and unprotected trees and landscaping.
- Light pollution, particularly from floodlights at the new schools site and proposed leisure facilities will impact upon nearby neighbouring residents.
- The site would increase noise pollution for nearby neighbouring residents, created by students and additional traffic.
- There are concerns that citizens will no longer be able to use the existing public footpath that runs parallel with Whittington Way.
- The needs of the community have not been considered by the developers in the proposal.
- Property value would decrease in the locality.

1.5 Impact of proposed housing sites, LPA references 3/10/1009/OP, 3/10/1013/OP, 3/10/1014/OP and 3/10/1015/OP

- The proposed residential developments are too dense for the sites.
- Bishop's Stortford existing infrastructure, including roads, schools, dentists, doctors and leisure facilities would not be able to cope with the extra development in the area.
- There is no need for the amount of proposed properties in Bishop's Stortford as there is already a considerable quantity being constructed; some of which are struggling to be sold and have remained incomplete and uninhabited.
- None of the proposed housing sites are allocated in the adopted Local Development Plan.
- The design of the proposed housing is not appropriate for the area and in particular the proposed 3storey buildings.
- The developments would set a precedent for more houses in Bishop's Stortford to be built that aren't allocated in the Adopted Local Development Plan.

Representations specific to:

Land south of Hadham Road 3/10/1044/FO and 3/10/1009/OP

Loss of Rugby Club Pitches;

- The new 'Jobbers Wood' site outlined for the Rugby Club is not adequate; it is too small to meet the needs of the Rugby Club and would result in the Rugby Club turning potential members away.

Lack of consideration of other sites;

- Many objectors have suggested that the Hadham Road site located adjacent to Patmore Close is an adequate sized site for a new school, which is not located in the Green Belt.
- Objectors comment further that the County Council had previously earmarked this site for a school site and should be used for that purpose.

Herts and Essex High School, Beldams Lane Sports Pitches, Beldams Lane 3/10/1014/OP

- Would involve a loss of sports facilities and a valuable local community resource.
- The housing development would result in an increase in traffic, particularly in Haymeads Lane and at the 'Nags Head' road junction, which would be more dangerous.

Herts and Essex High School (3/10/1015/OP)

- Concerns with the extra traffic in the area, particularly in Warwick Road.
- The access to Warwick Road would be dangerous and it has been suggested that it should be relocated to a safer place.
- Comments that the design of the proposed houses would dwarf the existing houses have been received.
- There are problems with parking in the area at the moment; further housing would intensify this problem, particularly in Grange Road and Warwick Road.
- Many residents of Clayponds and Grange Road have concerns with the proposed housing development overlooking their properties.
- Residents also have concerns with the proposal to make Grange Road a 'through' road, which they comment would increase the amount of vehicle movements in the road.
- Warwick Road is a private, unadopted road and access to the new houses from this road is considered unacceptable without the agreement of the residents who pay for its upkeep.
- The legal authority of Herts Highways to require design standard to be met outside the curtilage of the site is questioned.

Bishop's Stortford High School (3/10/1013/OP)

- Concerns with the proposed residential development over looking and impacting upon Thorley Hill Primary School.
- One resident is concerned that the proposed development would not leave any 'room' for Thorley Hill Primary School to expand if they needed to in the future.
- Several parents who have children attending Blues Pre School, which is located on the Bishop's Stortford High School site are keen that the pre-school is also relocated with Bishop's Stortford High School.

As well as objections from individual residents, the Council have received objection letters from various groups and societies. A summary of the group objections are as below;

Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation (BSCF) – BSCF object to LPA references 3/10/1009/OP, 3/10/1012/OP, 3/10/1013/OP, 3/10/1014/OP, 3/10/1015/OP and 3/10/1044/FO. However, their objections mainly focus upon the proposal for the schools site at Whittington Way, LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP for several reasons:

Policy - Contrary to National Policies PPS1, PPG2 and the ODPM Circular 2005 in the Town and Country Planning Green Belt Direction. Comment that the proposal would have a considerable and irreversible impact on the Green Belt, and would generate a huge amount of traffic movement in the area. Comment that it is contrary to Local Policy and refer to the Inspectors decision to keep Whittington Way within the Metropolitan Green Belt when the 2007 Local Plan was drafted.

Educational need - Comment that the educational need would not provide a justification to build in the Green Belt. Acknowledge that it would be difficult for either school to expand on their existing sites, but point out that neither school needs to expand in order to maintain its academic standards or to refurbish existing buildings. Suggest that building larger schools would jeopardise the quality of education at the schools and would not be able to retain their individual characters as separate schools at the proposed site. The proposals would not increase parental choice of schools in the area.

It is suggested that the Hadham Road site is large enough to accommodate a new school and would meet the predicted shortfall of secondary school places by the LEA.; it would result in less traffic congestion than the proposed site and would be more accessible to pupils than the proposed site.

Access/traffic - the proposed housing would generate more traffic and would be contrary to Policy T4 of the Local Plan. They critique the transport assessments submitted in the application and outline that it has '*fundamental inadequacies*' and that fewer pupils would be in walking distance of the school.

Existing school sites – comment that existing schools sites are located well in terms of bus and train routes/stations and the 2No. existing school separate sites disperse traffic, whereas the proposal would concentrate the traffic in one area.

Housing - is not allocated in the Local Plan and would lead to an increase of traffic in the area.

Landscaping - disagree that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the landscaping and wildlife in the area.

Noise disturbance from Stansted Airport would be unsuitable for educational facilities and would be exacerbated by Stansted Airport expansion.

Bishop's Stortford Rugby Club object to application LPA reference 3/10/1044/FO. Comment that the loss of the rugby pitches would prevent the club from being able to provide suitable facilities for members. They also have concerns that the Jobbers Wood site is not suitable to meet their requirements and is not sited in a convenient location for members of the Rugby Club.

Blues Pre School comment that they have been established for thirty years and wish to be considered in future plans, preferably relocated with Bishop's Stortford High School. Further comment that there is a demand for pre-schools in the area.

Chantry Community Association and Parsonage Residents Association object to the proposals and have concerns with the loss of the Green Belt and aircraft noise above the Whittington Way School site. There are also concerns that the proposals are contrary to National and Local Policy and have concerns that the proposed schools would not meet the shortfall of secondary school places predicted by the LEA, and would lead to further traffic congestion within Bishop's Stortford.

Thorley Manor Residents Association mention the above points in their letter of objection and also have concerns with the impact the

proposed housing developments would have on the infrastructure in Bishop's Stortford.

Open Spaces Society object to application LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP due to the loss of important Green Belt land and the loss of and impact upon the public footpath that crosses the Whittington Way site.

Old Thorley and Twyford Park Residents Association (OTTRA) have concerns about all six applications. They comment that the proposal under LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP does not warrant the very special circumstances required to build in the Green Belt and have concerns that there would be an increase in traffic, particularly in Pig Lane, Thorley Street and London Road. They have concerns about the proposal impacting on the rural area and resulting in noise and light pollution. Suggest that that Bishop's Stortford High School and Herts & Essex High School could be refurbished rather than being relocated. Comment that the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm to the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Haymeads Residents' Association object to LPA references 3/10/1009/OP, 3/10/1012/OP, 3/10/1013/OP, 3/10/1014/OP and 3/10/1015/OP. They comment that LPA reference 3/10/1012/OP does not warrant the special circumstances required to build in the Green Belt. They suggest that the site located off of Hadham Road would be more suitable for a new school, as it would meet the predicted shortfall of secondary school places and would reduce traffic congestion in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre. There are particular concerns that the proposal to develop on the Herts and Essex playing field, LPA reference 3/10/1015/OP would increase the traffic in the area. Concerns with the design of the proposed residential developments and the loss of public sport and leisure facilities are also outlined in their letter of objection.

Thorley Hill JMI Primary School has commented on application LPA reference 3/10/1013/OP. They have concerns with the impact of the demolition and construction works at the Bishop's Stortford High School. They also have concerns that their outdoor swimming pool would be overlooked by future residents of the proposed development.

Warwick Road Maintenance Association (WRMA) object to the proposal to redevelop the Herts and Essex Schools Site, LPA reference 3/10/1015/OP. They highlight that the site is not allocated for housing within the adopted Local Development Plan and comment that the site is not suitable for housing. Concerns are raised about the

proposed access to the site, and in particular the 'dangerous' junction between Warwick Road and London Road. The Association also comment that the site would be overdeveloped and too dense for the plot. Parking matters, drainage issues and the maintenance of Warwick Road are also raised in their letter. Warwick Road Maintenance Association recommend conditions if in any event the proposal is granted.

- 1.6 There have been 3 letters received in support of the applications. These are from residents of Bishop's Stortford, most of which have children who did attend or do attend either school. In summary, the letters of support suggest that there is need for more school places in the district. They outline that Bishop's Stortford High School and Herts & Essex High School are both in a very poor state of condition and that the proposal would provide a good opportunity to design 2No. modern schools with good facilities to support pupils' learning. The letters of support also point out that the proposed facilities at the new school site can be used by the community.

With regards to traffic in the area, the letters suggest that there would be a reduction in the concentration of traffic within Bishop's Stortford Town Centre due to the proposed site being located on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford, with the pupils that live in the Thorley and St Michael Meads areas of Bishop's Stortford being able to walk to the new schools site.