

Gareth Durrant
Planning and Regulatory Services,
Forest Heath District Council,
District Offices,
College Heath Road,
Mildenhall,
Suffolk, IP28 7EY

31st July 2014

Dear Gareth

Response from Governing Body from St Christopher's School, Red Lodge

**Re: Planning application F/2013/0257/HYB – Erection of 374 dwellings,
extension to village centre (etc.)**

Location: Land at Red Lodge and Herringswell

To ensure Councillors are fully informed of our objections please read this letter out **in its complete form** at the planning meeting. Having consulted with the governing body please find below our concerns and objections to this planning application:

1. Harmful to the Educational Attainment of Pupils

Forest Heath Local Planning Policy states “new development will be required to demonstrate that it will not harm the District’s ability to improve educational attainment”. Further building works or temporary structures will continue to exacerbate the on-going distractions from teaching that inevitably occur when a school continues to endure so much on-going change in terms of building works, staffing and turbulence experienced by rapidly rising pupil numbers, this was noted in the schools most recent OFSTED report. The school is in a “Requires Improvement” category and staff are working very hard to raise standards for pupils and need a period of stability to consolidate their progress. The constant changes required to induct new staff and amend systems and processes to accommodate rapidly rising pupil numbers inevitably impacts upon the school and potentially the schools ability to improve educational attainment. At the present time the school has been reviewed by the HMI and the Local Authority, since the OFSTED visit, and remains “requires improvement”.

As stated in my previous letter we were burdened with temporary classrooms for over 25 years at Tuddenham St Mary and for this reason we are not confident that this solution will be for a maximum of three years only, as stated in Suffolk County Council’s plans. We understand now that the proposal has since conveniently changed to locating the temporary classrooms closer to the existing building but as

far as I am aware there has been no consideration given to the movement of the pupils between buildings, with no covered provision made for inclement weather. The school's combined dining and assembly/music/drama hall is already at capacity and shifts take place to accommodate pupils' meal times. Any further increases in pupil numbers will impact on timetabling and the pupils' curriculum in terms of provision of space for indoor PE lessons, drama and music lessons to the detriment of the children accessing a wide ranging curriculum which will be further constrained due to the overcapacity of pupils. The school will be unable to fulfil its obligations to provide meaningful PE, music, and drama due to operational difficulties in delivering these aspects of the curriculum.

We are dismayed that we have ended up with an underfunded, inadequate facility with no foresight into the future. A facility that still has on-going issues with the building which Suffolk County Council are reluctant to resolve, despite meetings and much communication – we still await action plans from Senior Managers about how the issues will be resolved. This includes inadequate ventilation, air flow and excessive heat in classrooms which not only potentially impacts upon the learning of pupils but also the well-being of pupils and staff – additional pupils and staff will exacerbate this problem. We have had to furnish and equip our brand new building with second hand items, as we are with the four new classrooms, as we do not have sufficient funding within the school budget to equip the building. We are already in a deficit budget due to inadequate funding on opening of the school and this situation will worsen with the addition of further classrooms. On a day to day basis this impacts upon the development of the school in terms of providing sufficient current IT equipment, provision of current teaching materials and many other items required to promote and raise the attainment of the children.

2. Highways

The school already has safety concerns regarding the usage of Bellflower Road with much movement of vehicles along this road particularly when pupils are arriving and leaving school. With no double yellow lines to prevent this road being used as a "drop off" we are fearful that there may well be accidents involving pupils. With four new classrooms being built presently and proposals for further development the number of vehicles will inevitable increase and with it the risks to the children attending the school. Vehicles frequently do not use the one way system and exit Bellflower Road onto Warren Road ignoring the no exit sign.

3. Conservation

With regard to conservation, our school is committed to conserving the Corn Chamomile and 5 banded digger wasp located in on our school site and we have concerns that further building works may harm these rare species.

4. Sustainability

Suffolk County Council failed to involve the school's staff or governing body in any discussions, planning or consultations regarding the future of the school or the provision of a second school. The first meeting we were invited to took place **after** the deferral of the original application and was at the invitation of Parish Councils who were extremely worried about educational provision in the local area. Our view is that Suffolk County Council needs to undertake a proper impact and feasibility study, and develop a considered strategic plan of the educational facilities required within Red Lodge fully consulting local residents and existing educational facilities including early years provisions. It is crucial that the impact upon the sustainability of existing educational establishments is fully explored and considered before determining this planning application.

We leave it to councillors to judge, given the information in our response, whether they truly feel that further expansion complies with Forest Heath local planning policy not to harm the District's ability to improve educational attainment. Our view is that it will harm the educational attainment of our children at a significant period in their lives.

We therefore **strongly object** to the application and would urge Councillors to refuse this planning application.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Spence

Acting Chair of Governors.