



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Simon Jones
Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste
Kent County Council
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

HW/JW/160310

22 January 2019

Peer Jones

Bearsted Primary and Snowfields Academies – highways access

A planning application for these two new schools has recently been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council.

Both schools are desperately needed: Kent County Council has forecast a shortage of primary school places in this area from 2020 and local children with special educational needs already have to travel long distances to attend suitable schools.

The Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) have undertaken an analysis of 27 sites in the area and have concluded that the site off Bearsted Road is the only suitable location for both schools.

However, Borough and Parish Councillors - together with residents - have raised serious concerns with me about the proposed access to the schools and parking provision for parents.

The current proposal is for the school to be accessed from Bearsted Road. There will be provision for 49 drop-off places for cars, minibuses and taxis. Nearly 60% of the primary school pupils are forecast to walk to school, while the special school children, who will come from a wider catchment area, are expected to be dropped off by car or mini-bus.

Cont/...

Tel: 020 7219 6472 Email: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk www.helenwhately.org.uk

If you would like to find out more about what I am doing in Faversham and Mid Kent, please do sign up to my newsletter on my website.

All personal data you share with me will be processed and stored securely in confidence. I may allow access to your data to authorised staff, and share it with third parties where it will help your case. I may contact you from time to time to keep you informed. You can read my full privacy notice at: helenwhately.org.uk/privacy
Hard copies are available upon request. Please let me know if you have any questions about these arrangements.



-2-

Firstly, I am concerned that the applicant is being too optimistic about the number of children who will walk to school. While I support encouraging more children to walk to school and believe this is the best way of getting to school whenever possible, I am concerned that the assumptions don't fully factor in the locations of other schools in the area and the likely catchment area for the new primary school. In practice, a greater proportion of children may well be dropped off by car. This means that the number of parking spaces will surely be insufficient and cars may well park up on Bearsted Road. We know from experience that double yellow lines will not prevent this happening unless actively enforced. Given that Bearsted Road is already busy at morning rush hour, the extra school traffic combined with cars parked up on the roadside could cause chaos.

Local councillors have suggested that it would be better if the schools could be accessed from the Kent Medical Campus, possibly off Gidds Pond Way. This would avoid the entrance/exit directly onto Bearsted Road.

Can I urge Kent Highways to rigorously test the assumptions about pupil journeys before it submits its opinion to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), and also investigate this alternative access route.

I am only too aware that there will also be transport problems if the two new schools do not go ahead, as parents will be forced to travel further in their cars if the places locally are not available. It is therefore essential that everything is done now to make sure the transport plans for these schools make sense.

I am very willing to help in any way I can and am meeting shortly with DHA Planning, which is leading on the highways access design for the schools. I will convey my concern to their team about the potential difficulties with the existing planned access and urge them to fully explore the alternative proposal through the Kent Medical Campus site.

I hope that Kent Highways will look into this as a matter of urgency and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent