

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

✉ **Postal Address:** Highfield Park Visitor Centre, Hill End Lane AL4 0RA
☎ **Telephone:** (01727) 825 314
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Sent by email only to: planningcomments@stalbans.gov.uk

18th June 2024

Planning Application 5/2022/0599 also referenced under APP/B1930/W/23/3333685

At: Land Rear of 96 – 106 High Street, Colney Heath, Hertfordshire

Re-Consultation due to incorrect publication of boundaries of the site

Colney Heath Parish Council (CHPC) wish to make the following comments on the amended access plans.

The loss of the grass strip to be replaced by a path abutting the fence will change the character of this area. This proposed change will result in the visual urbanisation of the area. Colney Heath is settlement within Green Belt rural features such as grass verges which make considerable contribution to the rural character of the village.

The loss of green strip beside the fence will result in the loss of wildlife corridor and the isolation of the wildlife area in front homes by the High Street.

The illustrated proposed entrance to the football club is unworkable.

The greater distance from the proposed roadway has a number of significant impacts.

- 1) A greater distance across pavement and/or parking area is required for vehicle to travel before turning into the football club car park.
- 2) The greater distance before turning requires a larger turning area, the illustrated route is impossible for any vehicle to safely make the turn into the football club car park.
- 3) Due to the length of the cross over and area required to turn into the club car park this will result in the loss of a considerable number of car parking spaces. This will also result in a considerably longer distance where vehicles cross the raised footway, mostly likely at an angle which for vehicle with restricted side vision poses a risk to pedestrians on the walkway.
- 4) Any loss of car parking spaces will impact parking elsewhere in the village resulting in road safety issues. The High Street and Cutmore Drive already have double yellow lines. The High Street by the school has zebra crossing which also restrict parking.
- 5) In the event of an incident at the football the access for emergency vehicles which are generally larger than cars etc and will require a greater area to cross over the walkway and to turn into the club car park resulting in a further loss of parking spaces or will result in delays accessing the incident if they are unable to get closer.

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Currently the existing street lighting is on the grass strip and will require relocating. Any loss of street lighting in the car park area would be of considerable concern to the CHPC as the school has events that take place after school and the winter months will increase the safety risks in the car park. Any loss of street lighting will also have safety risks for the football club.

The amended drawing fails to show how access will be maintained to the track leading to fishing lake. This has a number of issues.

- 1) The movement of the proposed access road by approximately 2m means the track will not line up the road, this will result in vehicles having to cross the raised pathway. How will this crossing be safely managed?
- 2) How will vehicles access the fishing lake beyond?
- 3) The football club has an access gate from the track, how access to this gate will be maintained is unclear. This has several issues for site maintenance and the use grass area away from the pitch for additional car parking as was demonstrated at the time of the inspectors evening visit.
- 4) Access to the football club for emergency vehicles.

Any additional loss of car parking for both the school and the football club has significant road safety risks.

The Parish Council has invested significantly in creating a fully accessible play area, which will open in the coming months. This area is designed to accommodate disabled children, and specific provisions include dedicated disabled car parking spaces. However, the amended drawing fails to illustrate how disabled users, particularly those in wheelchairs or arriving via minibuses with tail lifts, will safely access the play area.

Here are the key points on use of the new play area at the recreation ground:

- 1) **Wheelchair Access:** The drawings do not provide clear pathways or access points suitable for wheelchair users. Ensuring safe and convenient access is crucial for inclusivity and the usability of the play area for disabled children.
- 2) **Minibus Access:** There is no indication of how minibuses equipped with tail lifts can safely drop off and pick up disabled users. This omission poses a significant barrier for groups and individuals who rely on such transportation and who have been notified of the imminent opening of this exciting local project.
- 3) **Emergency Vehicle Access:** The design must accommodate emergency vehicles to ensure prompt and unhindered access in case of incidents. This is essential not only for the safety of disabled users but also for all children participating in various activities, including football and other sports.

In light of these concerns, we suggest the following action are considered:

- **Revised Drawing:** Submission of a revised drawing that explicitly details access routes and facilities for disabled users, including appropriate pathways for wheelchairs and designated areas for minibuses with tail lifts.

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- **Access Evaluation:** An evaluation by an accessibility expert to ensure that the proposed design meets all necessary standards for disabled access.
- **Emergency Planning:** Inclusion of clearly marked and accessible routes for emergency vehicles to ensure safety and compliance with emergency response requirements.

The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that the new play area is inclusive and accessible to all children. The current amended drawing falls short of this commitment, and we urge the inspector to consider and address these critical equality issues.

The amended drawing fails to show how there is inadequate provision for safe access to the Parish-owned storage building, which is essential for both the Parish Council and the local football club.

The storage building, which has historical significance as it was originally an air raid shelter, is currently used under a shared arrangement between the Parish Council and the football club. Access to this building is required at least twice a month for the movement of heavy items, which necessitates parking a vehicle directly outside the building to facilitate safe loading and unloading.

Here are the key points of our objection on this matter:

- 1) **Access for Heavy Items:** The amended drawing does not show how vehicles will access the storage building for loading and unloading. The current practice involves parking outside the building, opening the up-and-over door, and moving heavy items in and out or driving machinery in and out. The proposed pathway obstructs this essential access.
- 2) **Historical Usage:** This building has been in use by the Parish Council and the football club for an extended period, with historical ties to the community, including past residential use by the football club's groundsman and his family. The continuity of its use is important for the local heritage and community activities.
- 3) **Safety Concerns:** If the proposed pathway becomes a thoroughfare for traffic, it will create safety hazards during loading and unloading. There would be no safe area to park and handle heavy items, increasing the risk of accidents.
- 4) **Operational Disruption:** Denying access to the storage building due to the proposed pathway will disrupt the operational activities of both the Parish Council and the football club, which rely on this storage for essential equipment.

In light of these concerns, we request the following actions be taken:

- **Revised Drawing:** Submission of a revised drawing that clearly delineates safe vehicle access to the storage building, ensuring that parking for loading and unloading is not obstructed.
- **Access Plan:** Development of an access plan that accounts for the historical and operational needs of the storage building, ensuring its continued use without compromising safety.

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- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Engagement with the Parish Council and the football club to understand their requirements and incorporate practical solutions into the revised plans.

The Parish Council values the historical and functional importance of this storage building and is committed to maintaining its accessibility for the community's benefit. The current amended drawing does not adequately address these needs, and we urge the inspector to consider making the requested adjustments.

Sent by Mrs Lisa Peters
Parish Clerk
For and on behalf of
Colney Heath Parish Council
18/06/2024