Planning Application 23/26/00004

At the extraordinary meeting, held on Wednesday 21st October, to discuss the planning application, for construction of a new secondary school on 'Land to the West of Broadlands Lane and North of, Spaxton Road, Durleigh', by majority vote, the council resolved to OBJECT to the application in the following respects:

(1) Access and highways safety.

The proposed highways infrastructure leading to the site is inadequate and fails to provide safe active travel.

Approaching along Durleigh Road from the east by the corner of Luxborough Road there is a proposed uncontrolled crossing on a raised table at the bottom of the narrow unpaved stretch of Spaxton Road to the Enmore turn. There is a second uncontrolled crossing across the Enmore Road. There is a third uncontrolled crossing on a raised table west of Broadlands Lane from the new cycle and pedestrian lane from the south to the north of Spaxton Road and into the new school site.

The Spaxton and Enmore roads are busy especially at morning and afternoon rush hour times. Any traffic issues, as for example the M5, A38 through North Petherton or the A39 near Cannington only increase the traffic along these roads. To expect hundreds of children walking or cycling to cross three times, twice a day, without even a zebra crossing or managed light operated point is particularly unsafe. It makes a complete nonsense of the promotion of a safe and active travel plan. Parents would be unwilling to let their children risk their safety at such crossings. They would instead drive them to the new site putting further strain on the highway. There should ideally be a toucan time-controlled crossing at the very least.

It should be noted that, and was approved, in the original application, 23/10/0004 under Building Schools for The Future, the pedestrian and cycleway along the narrow stretch of Spaxton road devoid of footway, was on the north side. This would allow a safe and continuous passage for pedestrians and cyclists without the need for any of the three crossings of busy roads in this latest submission. Then the only junction needing to cross is that of the private Broadlands Lane with Spaxton Road which has few vehicles and nothing beyond a raised table crossing at most is required, as per original application. The BSFTF had a roundabout proposed at the Enmore junction as the traffic justified such. The Enmore junction is especially busy at school dropping off and pickup times as scores of cars from Durleigh and Bridgwater take children to Enmore School.

The new Haygrove site entrance is close to a bend and on the inside of a curve. This gives rise to concerns of safe access.

(2) Traffic.

The application makes no mention of the traffic situation that will occur at school pick up time. At the current site and surrounding roads there is chaos at the end of school. The Durleigh Road and adjoining side roads are clogged up with parked cars waiting to collect children. The new site is much further out of town with the strong likelihood of there being more vehicles waiting to pick up children, particularly with the concern of poor road safety aspects as mentioned above. In addition, there are not the opportunities for parking. The only nearby side roads are the narrow private Broadlands Lane and equally narrow West Bower Lane. There are no parking opportunities on the Spaxton or Enmore Roads. There will thus be chaos every school day afternoon. Double yellow lines are needed along both sides of Spaxton Road, at the junctions of the joining roads and not least down Enmore Road. The parking spaces on site will be insufficient for the 116 full-time equivalent staff let alone any parental pick up. Something must be done to address this issue as the parking opportunities are inadequate.

There is a steady stream of traffic passing the site entrance: tractors and trailers using Skimmerton Lane, articulated lorries, and haulage lorries going to the land fill site further along the Spaxton road. Peak time traffic surveys would show this. No traffic survey appears to have been done.

(3) The new school site layout / inadequate parking / overlooking and disturbance issues.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph the number of car parking spaces provided on site will not meet the needs of staff let alone visitors and parents. It is stated that there are four drop off spaces on site but there is no mention of any pickup provision anywhere on site or nearby. This is clearly a huge issue that needs to be addressed before any planning permission is considered.

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The school site consists of three fields owned by Somerset County Council. Under the approved original planning application, 23/10/00004 under Building Schools for The Future it was made a feature that the buildings were positioned to the northwest of the site well away from nearby housing. This application has the buildings in the southeast of the site just 30 metres from and overlooking houses in Broadlands Lane and Merridge Close and causing noise issues. This is not acceptable.

(4) Other reasons / the future.

A significant pinch point is Skimmerton Lane to the northwest of the site leading to the A39 Quantock Road. This is a narrow lane with two or three passing places. The application refers to this and states widening it would just increase traffic. The new school will increase traffic regardless of any widening. Surely the whole point is to improve a through and safe flow of traffic, not least to allow coaches and other vehicles bringing children from the west each day to use it thus avoiding the unsuitable Durleigh estate roads.

The application states the present new housing development to the north of the A39 is not in the Haygrove School catchment. However, the three hundred plus houses to be built in two stages to the south of the A39 in adjoining fields to the Haygrove site should be taken into consideration. How are children from there to access the new site without causing considerable extra traffic in years to come? The original BSFTF plans had the main access being to the Quantock Road making access for pedestrians and vehicles easier.

There is a feeling that this application should be placing highways access, safety and safe active travel infrastructure as a priority ahead of any other considerations.

If you wish to view / comment of the application, please see the documents on the Somerset Planning Portal for full details of the application;
https://sdc.somerset.gov.uk/planning_online/GetDetails?app=23/26/00004

Thank You

Durleigh Parish Council