



SCHOOL TRAVEL NEWS....

With the KWS opening imminent the school got an unexpected opportunity to test its travel planning skill last week. Following a bail-out from the inaugural school trip due to inclement weather, coaches returned the children to the new school mid-morning while parents were simultaneously summoned to come and collect the returning children. Chaos ensued with the local road blocked and even a school coach was trapped on site, giving residents and local road users a premature first taste of the school traffic flows.

The following day a sheepish letter of apology was hand delivered to a limited number of residents in the immediate vicinity. Reprinted below (for those others inconvenienced who might also have expected some form of communication) the letter offers the innovative prospect of a Travel Committee. In the meantime the Headteacher will write to parents telling them that it's not very neighbourly to clog up local roads in the vicinity of the school.

Unfortunately the 'Travel Committee' is not an inspired innovation, it's been a condition of the Planning Permission for over 18 months. The requirement is for the Headteacher and the Applicant (Herts County Council) to deliver it and have it functioning before the start of school operations. Despite a delay of 12 months (and 3 weeks) to prepare for this, it appears it did not come high enough up the priority list to warrant any attention whatsoever.

We therefore responded to Mr Smith's letter on Friday 27 September, inviting him to start in a more appropriate manner by properly including residents in the plans for management of traffic flows associated with the school. Our request is published below.

As you will see we have offered to reprint any response from Mr Smith to the points raised.

However we should point out that some activity has already taken place and more details are included at the foot of this article. None of these detract from the need for the school to hold a full residents meeting and we will, of course, afford maximum publicity to such an event should the school wish to undertake it.

Open Letter to Mr Tony Smith, Headteacher KWS 27 September 2019:

Dear Mr Smith

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2019. There was significant chaos on the day, but equally this was the first taste of the behaviour of the school's first year community to its neighbours, many thousands of whom had previously expressed grave concerns over the ability to manage traffic flows and, however few in number, enough of your community adopted a callous disregard for others and a level of arrogance that served only to confirm the worst fears of neighbours.

When considering how this situation arose a major contributory factor is that the planning grant had provisions requiring you to have set up and have held meetings of a Travel Plan Liaison Group (see copy from the most recent approval notice issued by the Local Planning Authority below); this is reinforced in the Travel Plan which names you specifically as the responsible person.

SCHEDULE OF 49 CONDITIONS TO BE ATTACHED TO PLANNING PERMISSION 5/1421-19 UNDER SECTION 73 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 TO VARY CONDITIONS 14 (PROVISION OF VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS), 17 (PROPOSED CROSSING/CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS), 18 (HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS) AND 24 (HIGHWAY WORKS) OF PLANNING PERMISSION 5/2733-17 WITH REGARD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW 6 FE SCHOOL BUILDINGS, VEHICULAR ACCESS/EGRESS ONTO THE LOWER LUTON ROAD, VEHICULAR ACCESS ONTO COMMON LANE, TWO PEDESTRIAN ACCESSES/EGRESSES ONTO COMMON LANE AND OTHER ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT AT LAND TO THE NORTH OF LOWER LUTON ROAD, HARPENDEN, HERTFORDSHIRE

20. **Bus Strategy Implementation Plan**

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the Bus Strategy Implementation Plan (reference: ST2813/BSIP-1906 Revision 0) dated June 2019. The additional bus services shall be implemented in accordance with the approved Plan (including any subsequent amendments to the approved Plan) and the services shall be provided during school term for the lifetime of the school.

Reason: To ensure that the additional bus services which are essential to promote sustainable travel are delivered in practice; in the interests of highway safety.

21. **Travel Plan – Liaison Group**

Prior to the occupation of Phase 1, the Applicants shall, working in partnership with the school, establish a Travel Plan liaison group. The Travel Plan liaison group shall meet before the start of each school term to agree the actions necessary to deliver the Travel Plan over the next school term and to discuss any transport issues associated with the operation of the school. The Travel Plan Liaison Group meetings shall be attended by a lead figure at the school and shall be open to representatives of local residents groups, local councillors and other stakeholders. Actions and minutes of each meeting shall be made available on the schools website.

Reason: To ensure the continued implementation of the Travel Plan; in the interests of highway safety.

However it is clear that you have failed to meet this requirement as no such group is in existence and the whole of your Travel Plan has been formed with the complete exclusion of residents' input. A review of the Plan, submitted under a separate application (to the LPA) for sign off without public discussion, shows there is in fact no plan for Phase 1 operation of the school in respect how the school plans to handle its flows of staff, pupils and other interested parties during year 1.

In such a situation it is inevitable that no planning results in chaos, and this was clearly not a situation that troubled the School or the Applicant. However the situation is unlikely to improve and before the school has even commenced operations with pupils present the car park is full and today there are staff/visitor cars parked on the road outside the school. On Monday up to 170 pupils will be delivered to the school in addition to staff and visitors. They will be greeted with:

- No apparent plan for how to complete their journey into and out of the school (judging by the performance last Tuesday when a coach delivering children back from the abandoned trip was unable to leave the site due to road being blocked by collecting parents, there is no provision for the new bus services to deliver children onto site)
- Continuing roadworks on the Lower Luton Road – recently extended by another 6 weeks to end October and restricting flows on the Lower Luton Road to single line alternate flows with associated lights on all roads in and around the junction of Common Lane
- Added restriction of no right turn from the service road outside Lea Springs (forcing legitimate exiting traffic onto Common Lane)
- No bus stops in position on Lower Luton Road at junction as planned for school use (previous provision has been removed)
- No bus stops on Common Lane, other than a single temporary stop labelled as serving both directions (as no pavement exists on Southbound side)

And, to add a further hazard, the kerb drops that were to have been installed from the Service road entrance to the school with a short pavement have not been completed meaning no paved exit from

the school, presumably obliging pupils to be disgorged directly onto the east side of the road at Common Lane.

Of course I am aware that when questioned about the safe access to the school in the short term after the additional delays to roadworks were declared (Herts Advertiser) you said you saw nothing to prevent the safe opening of the school on 30 September.

Your letter invites two residents to join the "Travel Committee" – with the aim of communicating your intentions and explaining your actions. I think your approach is bizarre – in essence you appear to be asking for residents to accept a plan you denied them input to and then to explain (or do you mean promote) the school's interests to those most badly affected by it – an analogy would be to ask for a couple of turkeys to promote Christmas.

In reality the first step in this process is to incorporate resident's concerns in the Travel Plan, and the logical step to do so is for you to call a meeting of residents to explain your plan, how it affects residents, receive questions and points from residents and explain how you would intend to modify your Plan to allay residents' concerns and protect their amenity and then, and only then, establish the required Liaison Group to monitor ongoing performance.

Therefore I formally invite you to come to the community, organise such a meeting **for residents** to address the major shortfalls generated by the exclusion of residents, at the earliest possible opportunity. If you have a provisional committee of other attendees they could accompany you in such a meeting and represent the views of their respective stakeholder groups. I would further suggest that the current circulation of your letter, which I understand to be to Common Lane residents only, is superseded by a wider invite to other affected residential areas – namely residents of Mackerye End, Lower Luton Road (including spur by ford), Eastern side of Batford estate (Milford Hill, Tallents Crescent, Finley Road, Holcroft Road, Roundfield Avenue, Southview Road, etc), Batford Road / Gibraltar Lodge; Lea Valley estate, and Marquis Lane and northern end of Crabtree Lane and associated spur roads. It may also be appropriate to include those businesses on Batford Mill estate, some of whom have suffered significant impact as a result of the roadworks.

I note that your Liaison Group includes representation from local councillors – I would suggest that in this context Wheathampstead Parish Council are invited as many of the borders of the school are in their parish. I would further note that careful consideration is given to any role assigned to a County Councillor as the County Council are of course the applicants who have jointly failed with you to make this happen when it should have. I will be sharing this as an open letter on RSRP media and therefore extend the courtesy of publishing any response from you on the same.

Yours Sincerely

David Cairns (Common Lane resident / Chair RSRP)

And the original letter to limited number of local residents:



KATHERINE WARRINGTON SCHOOL

25th September 2019

Dear Neighbour

I would like to apologise for the parking that occurred yesterday (24th September) by some of our parents. The circumstances were unprecedented and contrary to any of our planned set up for opening the school with students on Monday 30th September. I understand that several neighbours were inconvenienced and that is not a situation we want to occur again going forward.

To that end, we will be forming a Travel Committee at the school. The Committee will meet termly to review and implement travel processes within our influence with the aim of promoting sustainable travel methods amongst our students and reducing our impact on the local transport routes.

I would like to invite two local residents to join the Travel Committee. The aim would be for them to channel any concerns from neighbours, communicate our intentions and explain our actions. If you feel this is something that would be of interest and that you are in a position to attend the meetings at the school during an afternoon and voice the suggestions of neighbours as a whole, please email me at head@kwschool.co.uk.

We will write to our parent body again before Monday to restate that parking close to the school is not conducive with the school being a good neighbour and parking in a manner that prevents local residents from entering/exiting their own driveway is a traffic offense.

Once again, please accept my apologies concerning the few who parked selfishly yesterday.

Kind regards

The recent (last minute) changes:

At the time of writing (afternoon Friday 27 September) the pavement at the service road exit on to Common Lane was unfinished and surrounded by barriers – no work had taken place on it throughout the day, although a final covering of tarmac was apparently all that was required. On Saturday morning a team – we lost count at 11 – turned up along with a lorry of tarmac (not usually produced at weekends) to tarmac the remaining 10 m of pavement (photo). Many will speculate that this would be an expensive exercise with excessive numbers of premium cost labour and materials – or of course it could just have been planned that way (you can form your own opinion because it is unlikely the true cost of this project will be revealed for some time). Nonetheless if it is the case that resident interest has once again embarrassed authorities into safer practice then it is unlikely that many will object to the short term inconvenience even if it is attributable to those paid to have the responsibility to deliver it.



In parallel it would appear that Mr Smith was as good as his word and was indeed issuing advice to parents for Monday morning's start, including some on travel. Recognising that all the bus stops in the vicinity of Common Lane / Lower Luton Road are out of use he has advised that pupils disembark at the stop on Lower Luton Road adjacent to the path to river footbridge and cross by the pelican crossing – unfortunately the space on the other side will accommodate a very small of pupils before they are obliged to spill onto Batford Road. It also misses the point that plans have directed to use of service bus 357 (formerly 657) which of course serves Common Lane and Batford estate, so does not go the stop advised. The stops in Common Lane have been out of service for a number of months now – the alternative being the temporary stop serving both directions of travel as no pavement exists (see photo).



With a projected 56% of pupils using bus services that's a significant number to hail a bus from one side of the road then cross to board it on the other.

Of course not all will use buses, those walking / cycling from Lea Valley are likely to find changes to the temporary footpath. Residual tarmac was hastily added on Saturday afternoon in what appears to be a re-routing of the footpath to allow construction of the long term school entrance. This is expected to see the footpath shifted to allow construction of kerbs to allow completion of the link. This will then have to be tarmacked and created as the principal entrance for construction traffic. This was originally scheduled to be in place 6 weeks after construction started, then progressively moved to April, July and missed the Kier target completion date of 26 September, although the revised planning permission requires this by end September.



Perhaps the most ambitious challenge comes from Mr Smith's reminder of the welcome awaiting parents at the school's event scheduled for Monday evening – it is accompanied by a copy of the recommended area for school users to abstain from parking in – it's on the school website – perhaps you can let us know how many parents you spot walking the half mile plus to the school!