



## **Update: Another Delay – 5 February 2018**

### **Imminent Planning Hearing - DELAYED**

A special meeting of Hertfordshire County Council's Development Control Committee, set to review the School Planning Application on 8<sup>th</sup> February has been cancelled. Although not formally announced, the cancellation was first heard of through third party notification via the Harpenden Society.

The reason cited for the delay is officer workload – that the Officer's report, outlining the material factors and responses for Councillors to review and base their judgement on, has not been finalised. It is anticipated that the report will be ready for publication by 14<sup>th</sup> February and the meeting to review will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Whether all necessary material will be available and presentable by then or whether it gives enough time for those Councillors to thoroughly review is another question altogether.

Another delay will not come as a surprise to many in a project that has been dogged by failed promises for many years. Significant changes and additions to the material presented in the application have occurred as the application progressed, some as late as last week after the now cancelled meeting had been called. However some core elements remain missing, despite being pointed out by RSRP early in the process.

The publication of critical Landscape information, 2½ months after it was received by HCC Planners coupled with the unwillingness to provide a plan to protect the Archaeology on the site question both HCC's ability to follow procedure in the assessment and their commitment, as an applicant, to follow good practice.

RSRP contend that many of the faults with the Application stem directly from an identified and acknowledged failing in HCC schools planning processes. In 2006, following difficulties with the secondary transfer process in the Harpenden Education Planning Area, HCC held a formal and extensive enquiry (Scrutiny). This concluded that HCC's forecasting system did not provide sufficient information and recommended that more detailed planning was adopted. HCC accepted this and committed to implement the recommendation (and a number of others from the Scrutiny) but failed to do so. This failure was compounded recently by the commissioning of a "new" forecasting system. In reality it's more like the old forecasting system, but provided by a new supplier. Not only does the new system fail to address identified shortcomings, but so far it has only produced 4 years planning information where there used to be ten. It has also has required substantial 'manipulation' by HCC to produce material to support the application. The new system was signed off by Councillor David Williams in his role as Executive Member responsible for Education.

With the removal of funding from previous (2015) estimates, including removing over £6m for road safety measures, it is little wonder that many local residents think that local politicians are prioritising the Party Line and Profit over the People they were elected to represent. As noted in our previous update you can continue to make representations about the planning application – details of how and topics to consider are on our website.