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Mrs Emma Watkins
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You Ref: 2020/00874/RG3

Date: 26 October 2020

Dear Mrs Watkins

Planning Application by Vale of Glamorgan Council (“the Council”) for the Expansion of St Nicholas Church-in-Wales Primary School (“the School”)

I would like to object to the proposed expansion of St. Nicholas Church school on the grounds that the planning application still does not address the following concerns:

1. **The proposed one-way system submitted by the Council to mitigate my previous objection relating to safety, emergency access and parking is dangerous and unworkable;**
2. **Safety of the children at the school at drop-off and pick-up times** due to increased traffic and inability to separate traffic from children;
3. **Safety of residents within the immediate area at drop-off and pick-up times** due to increased traffic and inability to separate traffic from pedestrians;
4. **Restricted access for emergency vehicles during drop-off and pick-up times** due to gridlock on roads in St Nicholas made worse by a proposed dangerous one-way system which Satnavs will be unaware of;
5. **A drop-off zone on the school site controlled by the school would be unworkable** and put staff at public liability risk;
6. **The ill-conceived idea of a voluntary one-way system on local roads controlled by the school would be unworkable** and put staff at public liability risk;
7. **Parking and traffic chaos at drop-off and pick-up times.**

Objection 1 – One Way System

The Travel Plan, Transport Assessment (TA) and the Technical Note (TN) from AECOM proposes to reduce the risk to children and residents by introducing a one-way roads scheme within the village by voluntary means and if not by the issue of a Travel Regulation Order (TRO). The scheme proposed is both dangerous and unworkable. The idea of exiting on to the A48 from the middle road is extremely dangerous due to being blind sighted by traffic coming from the Cowbridge direction. The A48 to the right point curves leaving the vehicle exiting at severe risk of being hit by a vehicle coming from the Cowbridge direction. Although there is a 30mph speed limit, at this point traffic is often exceeding this speed contrary to the LHA surveys! I reckon 90% of cars trigger the 30mph speed signs in St Nicholas.

The Travel Plan proposes to make this a voluntary one-way system using staff at the school. This is neither fair nor safe to put staff in this position. Should they cause an accident they put themselves at risk of responsibility and would need to ensure they have full public liability insurance and protection. The staff have no real jurisdiction off school premises. Have staff and governors been consulted on this and are they aware of the position they are putting themselves in?

Should this voluntary system not work the Council are proposing a TRO to enforce it. This would require further consultation which begs the question of what would happen if the Planning application was approved based on this assumption and the TRO was later rejected.

Objections 2 and 3 - Safety of children at the school and safety of local residents

There is imminent danger to children at the school and local residents during drop-off and pick-up times. Parents or guardians of the children jostle for prime position performing 3-point turns and reversing round corners to turn around prior to these times. Then there is a rush to get away. There is a severe risk that a child or local resident may well be knocked down. There are no footpaths going from the school to Ger-Y-Llan so children must walk on the road. An accident waiting to happen. The Transport report does not seem to address adequately the problem of lack of footpaths and road width. The PAC report totally dismissed my previous concerns with glib statements that the road infrastructure is typical for a rural setting which might be OK for a small school but certainly will not work for the expanded large school being proposed. There is an inference that pedestrians and cyclist will have an effect of reducing the speed of the traffic. A feeling that it would be alright as there have been no fatalities and no Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) is not acceptable.

The update puts great store on the one-way system to mitigate this objection with the council issuing a TRO to implement it should the voluntary one not be successful. I would point out that the change also proposes additional footpaths and crossings along with pedestrianising one of the roads. The proposal puts the only exit from the village via the central road which has severe vision limitation and puts vehicles at risk of a serious road traffic accident. It just will not work safely.

If this application is dependant on a TRO to meet the needs of the children and residents to be safe, then this must to be agreed and consulted on before this application is approved.

The Travel Plan, TA and TN in the revised application is dangerous and puts lives at risk.

I note the Council have still not requested an input from the police on this matter. This needs to be done before this application is approved by the planning committee.

Objection 4 - Access for Emergency Services

I still cannot find any mention of access considerations for police, fire and ambulance vehicles during drop off and collection times. I believe it is unlikely that they would be able to get through to all residents in the local community thus endangering local residents and for that matter children at the school. The PAC report again dismisses this comment. A statement is required from the emergency services that they have looked at this and are happy with it before this application is approved by the planning committee. Worth noting is that the voluntary one-way system will not be known to the emergency services using their Satnavs.

The update fails to address this concern and there is still no input from emergency services.

Objection 5 – Drop-off zone on the school site

The idea of a one-way drop-off system through the school grounds will in reality not work and certainly be difficult to set up and control. Furthermore, this will only be suitable for dropping off as collection will require the parent or nominated responsible adult to be outside the school gates when the child is released from school. It was considered at one of my schools in South Gloucestershire and rejected by the governing body, supported by the local authority, on the grounds of health and safety in that it was impossible to adequately segregate the children from the cars in a safe manner. In my 30 years as Chair of Governors I do not know of any school where parents are permitted to drive into school to drop off and pick up their children as a matter of routine. Another factor that must be considered is that parents love to talk and stay longer than they should resulting in a significant back up of traffic and parents resorting to parking in the surrounding streets which brings me back to my safety concerns above.

The Travel Plan and the Transport Assessment (TA) submitted in the update does not adequately address this concern. The school would not be able to cope with the increased numbers of cars without significant impact on traffic flow.

Objection 6 – Voluntary one-way system on local roads

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) and the PAC report put great store on the ill-conceived voluntary one-way system controlled by the school to mitigate objections 2, 3, and 5 above. This will not work. The school has no jurisdiction outside the school premises. The school and the governing body are leaving themselves vulnerable if anything they do causes an accident. Reliance on people being sensible and obeying instruction is questionable, as has been seen during the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

The revised proposal continues to promote this dangerous one-way system to address the safety of the children and residents. See Objection 1 above.

Objection 7 - Parking

The additional cars rising from an estimated 40 to 119 as a result of the expansion would gridlock the surrounding roads at starting and particularly at finishing time as well as during any special events going on at the school. Ger-Y-Llan already has a significant number of cars parked up at collection time and with the expansion this will become intolerable. Ger-y-Llan is used already extensively for parking at school drop off and pickup times and whilst most drive sensibly turning round at the end of the cul-de-sac, there are a few who travel at speed with little consideration for the local residents or the safety of children in the vicinity. They have been known to park across drives and are abusive if asked to move.

The Travel Plan, TA and TN fails totally to address the parking problem and uses flawed data in its case (only surveying AM traffic with desktop evaluation for PM traffic)

In summary I consider that before it goes to the planning committee then the following must be addressed:

- Written input from persons of authority in the police, fire and ambulance services relating to the safety of children and residents, access to residential properties and the unofficial/TRO one-way system.
- A full consultation and agreement on the proposed one-way system, pedestrianisation of one road and implantation of footpaths and crossings. This will affect more people than the school proposals so needs wider circulation. The two go hand in hand.
- A further revision of the planning application to adequately address my objections above.

I would like to add that I am astounded at the lack of consultation by the school and the Education Department with the community since the start of the proposal. I moved from South Gloucestershire to St Nicholas in December 2018. In Bristol I was chair of Governors for a Secondary school as well as chair of governors for several primary schools over a period of 30 years. I was chair of the South Gloucestershire Governors' Association working closely with the Education Authority and many other schools in the Authority. I have been involved extensively in multi-academy trusts and completely understand the need for additional school places and pleased that section 106 money will be made available with the balance from 21st Century Schools. My experience in these roles was to ensure that in any expansion or development like this it was essential to take the community along with you.

The school and the Council are so determined to get this through that they are suggesting the village of St Nicholas should fundamentally change to ensure that the enlarged school gets built. They are proposing the village should be re-designed around the school ignoring the fact that many residents have spent their whole lives here. Furthermore, throughout this process there has been little consultation by the school with the community to address things like how this will benefit the community. There is a lot of talk about benefits to the community at the start of the new school proposals but is really only lip service to get the project through. The original concept of Village schools was to provide an education to local residents within walking distance. Now to make the school financially viable the plan is to fill the school with pupils from outside the area leading to significant car journeys to get the children to school. The idea that parents will walk their children to and from school over 2km on the A48 is ludicrous.

Finally, it would be interesting to know how much these infrastructure changes would cost and where this expenditure lies. I am not convinced that this is the best use of Public Funds.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Geoff Howell.

Geoff Howell