

**Text of Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025 to The Howard Partnership Trust addressed to the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer from the Effingham Residents Association (EFFRA) signed by the Chairman with personal names redacted**

Further to the meeting of 31st January about the proposed plans to be submitted for the new smaller, school I am writing on behalf of the Effingham Residents Association (EFFRA) regarding our concerns about the proposed parking arrangements, in particular those for drop-off and pick-up by parents.

At the meeting, you will recall that both myself and the parish councillors were dismayed by the disclosed proposal to use the car park on Lower Road for drop-offs and pick-ups by parents and for it to be accessed directly from Lower Road. The Parish Council Chairman wrote on 7<sup>th</sup> February to the Development Manager at Berkeley Homes Southern to express that concern and asked that the arrangements be carefully considered before any application is submitted. Following the Development Manager's reply of 13<sup>th</sup> February, I had a telephone conversation with her as we were unclear whether these arrangements were being reconsidered. She confirmed that the intention was to submit the parking arrangements unchanged as presented at the meeting.

We understand the Howard Partnership Trust has been involved in these proposals and EFFRA formally asks the Trust to reconsider the proposals with Berkeley Homes because residents are very concerned by them. The original application was submitted and passed at Appeal on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018. Access arrangements for bus and coach as well as parents' drop-off and pick-up was on the access road using a one way system and was given as a benefit of the scheme because it would reduce congestion on Lower Road and make the children's journey to school safer. The use of the new access road from Effingham Common Road would also protect the village centre and the difficult junction outside St Lawrence Primary School from school traffic.

"2.1The two access points onto the spine road are to provide a one way system with vehicles entering the main car park from the northerly access and exiting from the southerly access. The main car park provides for 233 vehicles including 7 No. spaces for car drop off/pick up located on the perimeter..." (Transport Statement (19\_P\_01451-TRANSPORT\_STATEMENT-1321364))

There was much concern that the arrangement should be as good as possible and The Howard Partnership Trust and Berkeley Homes made the following undertaking:

"158 Further concerns are raised as to the size of the drop off area. Mr Foxall for the Appellants confirmed that he was content to discuss the drop off and design of the link road with EPC (subject to SCC as Highway Authority) approval." ((14/P/02109 Appeal Decision -1145908))"

Following the meeting of 31st January, EFFRA has discussed the proposals with residents, including at EFFRA's AGM in February. The unanimous reaction from residents has been of dismay and concern that the drop-off and pick-up is proposed to be on Lower Road. It is considered that the proposed scheme will cause worse congestion and have higher safety risks than the current situation. This was also said at the meeting by the representatives of the Parish Council and EFFRA. The Parish Council Chairman has been misquoted in the Development Manager, Berkeley Homes (Southern)'s email to her and the Chief Executive Officer, HPT 13th February as saying that the proposals would be a "significant improvement". The Parish Chairman is adamant she did not say these words and this is supported by other Parish Council and EFFRA representatives and is as recorded in our agreed notes of the meeting.

In the email of 13<sup>th</sup> February the Development Manager, Berkeley Homes (Southern) also says that the Transport Strategy to be submitted "has been developed by expert consultants, who have

worked alongside the school and highways authority to develop a scheme which is practical and policy compliant for schools, but also effective and specific in this context.” We hope that the Trust has seen and properly considered this assessment. To help residents understand why this change is proposed we would welcome sight of the analysis which presumably includes an expert impact assessment (properly quantified) of how this change will affect congestion and safety and compares it to alternative solutions using the link road. We understand Berkeley Homes might be concerned about the impact of the original scheme using the link road on property prices, but safety should not be compromised for a small financial gain. In any case this is likely to be illusory if safety is compromised and both Berkeley Homes and The Howard Partnership Trust suffer reputational damage as a result.

The current situation causes significant traffic congestion and safety concerns. Any proposed scheme must be the safest possible for children and adults and should also minimise traffic congestion so that it is supported by the community. The proposed scheme is contrary to the currently agreed scheme as it was a principle in that scheme that all access should be from the access road in the site not on Lower Road to improve the traffic flow on Lower Road and protect the village centre. The proposed scheme would involve cars travelling from both directions turning across oncoming traffic on entry and exit which would lead to queuing and be unsafe. Children would be likely to be tempted to get out of the cars in the road if the cars were queuing and try to cross the road. This currently happens when there is congestion. It would obviously be tragic if these latest proposals were agreed and implemented against the wishes of the community and a serious accident occurred. That is why EFFRA believes the issue should be raised at this stage to allow an optimum scheme to be designed that will be supported by the community.

The reduction of the size of the school buildings and the removal of the Callum Centre from the plans offers an opportunity to better utilise the space around the school and seek an optimum solution. The Inspector rightly specified an area of green space in front of the school to mark the separation of the villages of Effingham and Little Bookham. There appears to be an opportunity from the change in plans to redesign this green space which will increase the sense of separation of the two villages as well as offering the optimum solution of a suitable drop off and pick up area on the access road.

We therefore formally request The Howard Partnership Trust to reconsider the proposals with Berkeley Homes and to propose a scheme based on the original undertakings made to the Inquiry and the community that are the most optimal in terms of minimising safety issues and traffic congestion. We would be happy to discuss this further with you and ask for sight of the expert assessment that has been carried out. We need to understand why the proposed change is deemed to be safer and to cause less congestion as this is not at all apparent.

Given the level of concern in the village we will be placing this letter on our website so that residents are aware that we are taking their concerns seriously.

I look forward to hearing from you.