

## UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2018

The grant of Planning Permission to HCC earlier this year was ‘conditional’, meaning HCC as lead applicant had to undertake further work and make formal submissions (to itself) to discharge these conditions. Some of the 49 conditions must be discharged before work can commence on the site.

HCC began making formal submissions to discharge conditions in June and has 5 such submissions listed by August. The appearance of the Applications on the HCC Planning Portal is similar to full Planning Application, and to keep pace it is recommended that a search of the HCC planning Portal with Harpenden and applications submitted from April 2018 to date as criteria is undertaken. PL/0931/18 relates to the area of the ford.

The Council is not required to formally consult in public on these applications and no ‘public’ decision making process is needed. However it is no surprise that the Council choosing not to advise local residents, either formally or informally through a local County Councillor, has resulted in misconceptions in the media.

Further misconceptions have also been circulating in the media in other aspects of the case. Notwithstanding aspects which RSRP cannot currently comment on due to pending legal matters, RSRP can confirm it made a number of submissions to HCC on site selections and site options including a report in early 2014 which identified three alternatives which had not been considered previously. Following a Freedom of Information request some time later, RSRP learnt that the Council had taken no action on the report. It is RSRP’s understanding that RSRP were not alone in suggesting alternatives to HCC.

The recent discharge applications show HCC do not expect some of the condition decisions to be reached before November 2018. History of HCC’s performance in such matters would indicate extreme optimism is required to have any faith that the site would be ready to receive pupils in September 2019. In late August RSRP wrote to Councillors in all tiers of local government, along with others, to highlight the issues and urge that Councillors lobbied HCC to put in place a contingency plan for September 2019 intake. This included two potential site options, both of which would have capability at providing certainty for those applying for September 2019 secondary transfer, and both which would allow simple transition to any permanent solution when it was ready. Attention was drawn to HCC’s Education Panel – where any initiative would have to be approved – which was scheduled to meet on 21 September. That meeting took place and had no mention of contingency. In practice only a handful of councillors acknowledged, and no other interested party has responded. It is difficult to see that there can now be reassurance in place before close of applications.

### BREAKING NEWS (26 September 2018)

RSRP has been advised that its request to Appeal the JR outcome, which related to the proposed remedy for the failing that was found, has been declined. The decision was ratified on 25 September 2018

RSRP understand that this was the last stage in challenging the Planning Decision process, and once status has been confirmed will review its options. Further comment will follow, however as noted above the primary delays not only remain but remain entirely in the Council’s hands.