

We support the plan to build a new school at Gomersal St Mary's and recognise the benefits that a new building could bring to the community. Our family has a long association with the school with both our grown children being former pupils. We have lived at Shirley Avenue, with our garden backing onto the school for more than thirty years. During that time, we have valued the relative privacy and tranquillity created by the current arrangement of the school buildings and grounds. Having reviewed the proposals and attended the recent open evening, we wish to raise formal concerns regarding the overbearing position, scale, and proximity of the proposed development in relation to our property.

1. Proposed position of the new school building

The plans indicate a quoted distance of 23 metres between the new building and the main frontage of our home. However, when considering our existing, planning-approved extension and conservatory, this separation distance is reduced to approximately 20 metres. At these distances our view is that the proposed structure would represent a substantial, intrusive, and visually dominant presence when viewed from our property.

The height, massing, and overall scale of the building mean that it would have a materially harmful impact on our outlook. The development would significantly alter the character of the immediate environment and would result in a level of visual intrusion that we believe is unreasonable and unacceptable for a residential setting.

The proposed siting of the main school building appears to be driven primarily by the need to maintain operation of the existing school during construction, rather than by the best long-term outcome for the site and its neighbours. While minimising disruption during the build is understandable, this should not outweigh the need for a permanent layout that properly respects surrounding residential amenity. Planning decisions should be based on the most appropriate design for the lifetime of the development, not short-term logistical convenience during the construction phase.

A more balanced approach would be one that accepts some temporary inconvenience and requires appropriate contingency planning. This would enable a building design and site arrangement that is far more sympathetic to neighbouring residents and would better reflect the school's responsibility to integrate positively with its environment and to minimise the impact on those living around the site. There is no evidence that such alternatives have been meaningfully assessed or discounted.

2. Noise, footfall, and outdoor activities

The proposed building's closer proximity to our property would increase noise, footfall, and activity next to our home. Our main concerns are:

- Parents gathering at drop-off and collection times immediately adjacent to our boundary which would result in increased noise, increased intrusion and loss of privacy.
- Break and mealtimes, with pupil recreation areas positioned closer to our boundary and therefore intensifying noise and activity.
- Outdoor educational activities taking place in closer proximity to neighbouring gardens.

We recognise that a school is naturally an active environment and that some level of noise and movement is inevitable. Our concern is not with the school's normal day-to-day activities, which have never presented a problem with the buffer created by the current layout. Rather, it is with the proposed relocation of the building and its operational areas materially closer to our boundary, and the resulting loss of privacy and increase in intrusion.

3. Construction phase

The construction phase is expected to last more than two years and would introduce heavy plant and increased construction traffic into an already constrained residential estate.

Parking and congestion around the school are already problematic. Against that background, the proposed works are likely to intensify disruption for local residents, including increased conflict, inconvenience, noise, mud, dust, and road safety concerns.

For many residents, their home is their principal financial asset. A development that causes prolonged disturbance, increased congestion, and a material reduction in residential amenity may reasonably be expected to affect buyer demand, marketability, and the value of neighbouring properties.

4. Landscaping considerations

The proposed landscaping should be assessed carefully, particularly in relation to species selection, growth rates, mature height, and ongoing maintenance.

This is especially important because the school has previously failed to maintain existing trees and shrubs along the boundary at an appropriate height. As a result, the favourable aspect of our property has already been significantly affected by loss of sunlight. For example, willow trees along the boundary are now around 30 feet high and can grow by 3 to 8 feet per year.

When considered alongside a proposed building height of 5.5 metres in close proximity to our property, any further inappropriate planting could materially increase shading and reduce daylight even further.

5. Security fencing

An additional security fence is proposed along the boundary, alongside the existing wooden fence that separates our property from the school grounds.

Before any installation works proceed, clarification is needed on the following points:

- The precise location of the proposed new fence.
- Responsibility for vegetation control if a gap is created between the two fences must remain that of the school.
- Provision of a legally binding right of reasonable access onto the school's land so that our existing boundary fence can be inspected, maintained, and repaired.

6. Conclusion

In light of the concerns outlined above, we ask the planning authority to require amendments to the proposal so that the long-term layout of the site properly safeguards neighbouring amenity.

We fully support the school's need for modern facilities. However, this should not come at the cost of significant and avoidable harm to nearby residents.

A more sensitive design and building position would allow the school to benefit from improved facilities while preserving the privacy, outlook, and quality of life of residents and neighbours.