

Formal Representation of BVHRC's Position Regarding the Proposed Educational Facility on School Lane

Submission on Behalf of Bladon Village Hall and Recreation Committee (BVHRC)

Reg. Charity no. 304269

Dear Inspector,

ENO 10147 Q1.16.21 Educational Facility Building

As Chair of the Trustees, I am responding on behalf of The Bladon Village Hall and Recreation Committee (BVHRC), an established charitable organisation, which owns and manages the Recreation Ground situated at the top of School Lane in Bladon. This response is submitted on behalf of the BVHRC to express our grave concerns regarding the proposal to construct an educational facility at this location. Our primary concern is the safety and welfare of the very many users of School Lane.

Community Role of the Recreation Ground:

The Recreation Ground serves as the primary outdoor space for residents of all ages in Bladon. Its facilities include:

- A playing field and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for children and pupils from the local primary school
- A fully equipped children's play area
- An outdoor gym and boules court for all age groups
- A community orchard and a wildflower meadow

This space is the only such facility in the area and is accessible primarily on foot, ensuring a safe, traffic-free environment for recreation and social interaction.

School Lane – a bustling hub of village life:

- Constantly used as a public right of way, connecting people to fields for walking and outdoor recreation
- Access to the Recreation Ground, Community Orchard, and wildflower meadow
- The primary access point to thriving Community Allotments, where residents actively grow vegetables and flowers throughout the year
- Essential entry for those attending burial ceremonies at the church graveyard
- A well-trodden pedestrian route leading to the Church, renowned for the graves of Winston Churchill and ancestors of the Duke of Marlborough, attracting locals and visitors
- Home to four residential properties, ensuring daily comings and goings
- The key pathway for children and families heading to the village Primary School every weekday morning and afternoon

Safety and Accessibility Concerns:

Our concerns regarding the proposed facility are serious and multi-faceted:

- **Road Safety:** School Lane is exceedingly narrow, lacks passing places, and the entry and exit points at its base are both restricted and hazardous. Vehicles often have to reverse onto the busy A4095, significantly increasing the risk of accidents.
- **Current Vehicular Access:** At present, vehicular use of School Lane is limited to essential journeys for the school, church and graveyard, the Community Allotments, and four private residences only.
- **Pupil Safety:** Bladon Primary School has a notably high proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), some of whom are at risk of wandering off. The risk of collision between children and vehicles is already substantial, especially during drop-off and pick-up times; any increase in traffic would heighten this risk considerably.
- **Emergency Access:** One resident requires guaranteed, unimpeded access for emergency medical purposes at all times – a necessity incompatible with increased vehicle congestion.

Impact on Community Access and Social Wellbeing:

The Recreation Ground is a vital amenity whose pedestrian-only access is essential to its role as a safe community space. Increased vehicular movement along School Lane in order to access a new educational facility would:

- Impair access for villagers, including children, families with buggies, and elderly residents
- Reduce the safety and enjoyment of the space for all users
- Restrict the only facility of its kind in the area, to the detriment of the community's mental and physical health

Wider Community and Heritage Considerations:

It is important to acknowledge that School Lane is also a heavily used public right of way, providing pedestrian access to the historic village church, the burial place of Winston Churchill, which attracts thousands of visitors annually. The lane also gives access to surrounding fields, popular with villagers and dog walkers. Any increase in traffic will disrupt these established patterns of community use and enjoyment.

Conclusion:

In summary, while a superficial assessment of the site may suggest School Lane could accommodate an educational facility, this fails to consider the daily lived realities and requirements of the community. The proposed development poses unacceptable risks to safety, restricts access to essential communal facilities, and would profoundly undermine the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

We therefore strongly urge that this proposal be reconsidered. The integrity, safety, and wellbeing of the Bladon community must remain paramount in any planning decision.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Gillian Forrest
Chair, BVHRC