1st August 2011

Ref BH2011/01264 Blatchington Mill School

Dear Mr Wright,

I am writing to you in relation to the planning application for twoartificial sports pitches on the playing fields at Blatchington Mill School.

After having carefully considered this planning application, I am not satisfied that this proposal of a commercial development is in the best interests of the school, the local community or the school's neighbours. I therefore strongly object to this application and have some concerns, which I have laid out below.

1. The way in which this application has proceeded:

Brighton & HoveHockey Club (BHCC) presented to the Governors but the local community were not allowed the same opportunity. I understand that the 3 local councillors in Hove Park ward had requested a meeting with the Hockey Club on behalf of the local community, but this was rejected. The only meeting offered was one where six residents would have been able to meet with the Hockey Club and one or two Governors might have attended. How were the local community to decide which six should go? All they were seeking were the same access to the Governing body as the Hockey Club had had.

2. Similar proposals having been rejected previously:

A similar approach was made to Dorothy Stringer, but they turned it down, as they understood the value of green space and wished to have a flexible sports and recreational space for all students to enjoy. Though they are two separate sites, the reasoning behind the decision at Dorothy Stringer to maintain open fields for multi-use is equally relevant to this application.

3. Concerns with regards to the Travel Plan:

I also have a number of concerns relating to the travel planning around this application and the additional strain a venue like this will place on the local infrastructure. My concerns include:

- How with the Travel Plan Co-ordinator be financed?

- As a daily cyclist living in Hove, I know just how difficult cycling in that area is – especially along Old Shoreham Road, Sackville Road and Nevill Road. Currently there are inadequate safe cycle lanes in the area,so I am not convinced that people will choose to cycle to the venue, instead opting for private cars.

- The pubic transport map is factually incorrect as it shows the hockey pitches in the wrong position.

- There seem to be no fixed targets regarding vehicle usage with these new pitches. The targets set by the transport initiative are solely based on surveys, and only 35% of people responded.

- While the site may be well-served by public transport, private car access will dominate - this is acknowledged in the Travel Plan submitted based on current travel surveys conducted. Local residents will have to contend with the practical consequences on a daily basis.

- With an increase of cars to the site there is likely to be an increase in CO2 emissions, which runs counter to agreed council targets.

- Visitors have been known to park their cars in the access road when football matches are being played, and the school seems to have failed to control this. With an increase in the number of cars to the area, I am not convinced that emergency vehicles would be able to access the site.

- The majority of BHHC members do not live locally, but it is local residents who are going to bear the brunt of the pressure on the local area.

- I m not convinced that BHHC understandsthe effect private vehicle use by its members and supporters has on local areas. For example, on the club's website, helping visitors find training and match locations, even though there are a range of public transport options, none are given, instead merely a postcode for 'satnav' use is mentioned:
http://www.brightonandhovehockeyclub.net/visiting_teams/

4. Privatising our children's play areas for commercial gain:

- Essentially this planning application is a loss of green space to a large development. This is the only green space for 1,700 students to use for sports and for breaks/lunchtimes. The loss of over forty percent of this green space for only timetabled sports is clearly denying the space for all students to use it daily. They will not be able to use this space for breaks/lunchtimes as the surface could become damaged, which would result in costly repairs, or the life of the surface being greatly reduced. Multi-sports will not be available as only limited sports can be played on the surface. This also restricts the use for many students.

- Why should we limit the amount of flexible green space for children to play in, in order to have a significant area of designated space where only hockey and 5-a-side football can be played? If the proposal were granted how would the School sporting activities be sufficiently accommodated around the pitches, for example, a running track and other sporting activities

- The current long jump area would be lost, and there has been no explanation as to where the current archery club will continue to play. If they play closer to the fence then this could possibly endanger residents in nearby houses.

- It does not seem right that planning permission is sought which in effect uses the school as the main base and training centre for Brighton & Hove Hockey Club, with over 300 members, to be used potentially between 8am and 10pm every day of the year including bank holidays, and for other commercial use

outside of Brighton & Hove Hockey Club for up to 18 hours for each pitch over a weekend. I think it disingenuous to suggest in the Draft Pitch Usage plans exhibited that the school will be using the site from 7pm – 10pm on weekends, as this would be a major departure from the current situation, where there is virtually no usage at those times.

- National planning policy supports the retention of school playing fields and opposes inappropriate loss of amenity to those that it serves. Also, Planning Policy Statement, PPS1, on delivery of sustainable developments must take into account the impact on communities and the environment.

5. Environmental impact:

Finally, I have concerns about the environmental impact this development would have.

- What are the environmental impacts of constructing this site?

- How will rubbish be collected? There are already problems when the field is used for football.

- The impact and intensity of the floodlights is being diminished in the proposals, yet there is a clear impact on neighbours. Playing fields will be floodlit during a significant part of the year by 12 steel lighting columns 15 metres (approximately 50 feet) in height. I feel that the effect of this is being underplayed and the practical consequences add to the unacceptable nature of the proposals.

- There seems to be no break in activities, and it seems local residents may have to endure additional noise and light pollution every day of the week up to 10pm. Further, it is untrue as stated in the Planning, Design and Access statement on Pg 5 in support of the application, that the school fields are currently *"used by community (non-paying) groups and commercial (paying) groups, often until 10pm in the evening"* and on Pg 3 that the *"school facilities are used extensively by community groups and clubs outside of school hours, at weekend and during school holidays"*. In fact, the school has thus far been mindful not to allow excessive use of the fields for primarily extra curricular school-related sporting activity, on a non-commercial basis. Again, it is wrong to state on Pg 11 that *"there should be no discernable increase in levels of noise and general disturbance over and above that which is already experienced"*. This wrongly suggests that a precedent has already been set, and this is not the case,

In conclusion, I very much hope that colleagues on the Planning Committee will see that this application is essentially an income-generating, commercial initiative for the school, with all the downsides that that entails. I feel that the

school needs to remain independent from commercial or outside influences in its service to pupils and to a balanced education.

As someone who is a keen sports enthusiast and as a representative on the City's Sport's Forum, I completely understand the need for such additional facilities in the community. However, this proposal is in the wrong location, is at odds with the role of the school, and possibly most importantly disregards the value of its playing fields, for the use and enjoyment of its pupils.

Sadly such a scheme (which is likely to be expanded to include a pavilion in due course, according to BHHC's website, should initial permission be granted) is being pursued for purely commercial objectives to profit the school financially, rather than for the benefit of pupils in its care, furthering genuine sporting policy or community objectives.

Residents are rightly concerned about the above issues, particularly noise disturbance. They have good reasonas the site will be open from 8am – 10pm every day of the year, and with likely light pollution from the 12 floodlights. It also seems likely that there will beadditional parking and traffic congestion issues, with knock-on effects on air quality, the local economy and the ability for residents to get on with their day-to-day lives.

The benefits to students remain unclear: I do not see any new need for artificial sports pitches. The school's claim that the pitches could allow the teachings of new sports seems weak, as it is unclear which sports would require a new artificial sports pitch. The school already has suitable grounds for sports such as basketball, tennis or hockey. The proposed artificial sports pitches would in fact restrict the space for a diversity of sports including others such as athletics, rugby or the long-jump.

Overall, I feel that the proposal does not benefit the school's pupils. I think that alternative locations where the traffic,noise, light pollution issues would be less problematic should be considered.

I am sorry not to be able to make a representation in person at the Committee meeting on 10th August, as I will be on annual leave at that time. Thank you for giving time to read this letter, and I very much hope members will decline this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Alex Phillips

Goldsmid ward, Hove

Member of the City's Sport's Forum