

43 Highfield

Letchworth

Herts

SG6 3PY

13th September 2025

Dear Sir

Since the supporting comments from 8 Highfield School teachers is effectively an addendum to the school's application. I would like to comment on a number of the points raised

- Whilst Sport England "does not object" to the plan it appears to not agree that "the lack of quality all-weather facilities has hindered sporting activities". It is only now that **emerging strategy** from the District and Sporting Councils identifies a desire for a full-size Letchworth all-weather pitch. The Highfield pitch is too small to satisfy that desire.
- I agree that we need "children outside not inside playing with their phones". but the replacement of a general play area by a dedicated, hard surfaced, fenced, football pitch has a negative not positive impact on that.
- The area "was never re-turfed and is no longer useable as an area for the PE department" The school had not found it worthwhile to use this area for organised sport in more than 10 years since the new school as built although doing so would have achieved most of the benefits it now claims for the more athletically able pupils without impacting the less able pupils or the neighbourhood.
- Letchworth is well served for children in most sports. Letchworth Eagles in particular are a great football asset. Sport England notes that there is "no existing community use" of Highfield School's pitches to the west of Briar Patch Lane although these are unchanged by the school building and (see below) are perfectly useable for all but extreme weather.
- I agree that "the current area is very cramped for 1000 students" but, partitioning off 60% with fences and concrete reduces the effective area.
- The 2008 Sports Hall Planning application statement said "Our fields are adequate for providing the facilities we require to teach outdoor Physical Education. With the exception of extreme weather outdoor lessons are rarely disrupted". I have been told that builders subsequently raised the level of the area subject to the current application. I am surprised that was permitted but, this should have improved natural drainage or incorporated additional drainage. While the all-weather pitch might solve a waterlog problem locally, run off from it will increase the problem for the remaining area and possibly cause waterlogging problems in adjacent gardens.
- It is not clear whether the supporter highlighting "anti-social behaviour in the local community" lives in Letchworth but In 44years living next to the school I have seen remarkably little "anti-social behaviour in the local community" and Highfield School pupils' behaviour continues to be excellent.

- this is not a "a safe surface that supports a wide range of sporting and physical activities." It is a football facility whose general use is limited by size, concrete standing areas and fencing. The surface is more prone to injuries than natural grass
- The current grassed area " is not appropriately equipped or maintained for effective sporting use". If the school does not have the capacity to maintain a simple grassed area surely the proposal to manage and maintain a commercial facility with multiple outsider-use 365days a year with no extra staff is not credible.
- The desire for "community engagement" is inconsistent with the school's failure to discuss this planning applications with the residents of Hitchin Road, Highfield, Sollershot West, Hillbrow and Pasture Road all of whom will suffer. **We are the local community** not for example the residents of South Bedfordshire who may benefit from coming to play on this all-weather pitch.
- I note that the majority of the school's teachers drive to work so live far from the problems the school seeks to impose.

Yours faithfully

Rod Emery