

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Tuesday 25th August 2026
at 7.30p.m at Champions Manor Hall

The Town Council has the following observations:

The report fails to address the volumes of traffic, with no evidence of expected traffic or overspill parking. There is a lack of the place and movement hierarchy in real terms for the expected catchment area of the school for employees and attendees. The parking restrictions proposed would both penalise residents and fail to address the parking issues. A condition of approval must be to address the parking spaces per staff and visitor/student ratio, with assurances to residents regarding the impact. The NHS family hub has been allocated four spaces; this is insufficient for the number of throughputs they have. The drop off point is designed to accommodate only one vehicle at a time, which would cause traffic back up during morning and evening periods.

The 2024 Parking Guidance includes a section titled "Parking provision in non-residential development" (Section 7.7) and a Combined Standards Table (Appendix B). These tables set minimum parking requirements for each land use class, including education uses. We feel that not enough weight has been given to this document in real world operational terms, given the numbers of expected staff and students. Access to the school is from a small side road rather than Gandalf's Ride.

The Essex Act 1987 places duties on developers to ensure adequate access and turning facilities for fire engines. The proposed access via a narrow side road raises concerns about whether fire appliances can safely enter, manoeuvre and exit the site if parking becomes an issue. The application does not show fire appliance turning heads, swept path analysis, or confirmation that Essex County Fire & Rescue Service has been consulted. Without this information, we cannot be satisfied that the development complies with the Essex Act or provides the necessary emergency access arrangements.

We welcome the encouragement of the use of public transport, but there is no direct provision for a bus service; nearest bus stops are located on Leighlands Road and Mount Pleasant Road, approximately 200 to 260 metres from the school entrance. While these stops are within walking distance, the application does not provide any assessment of expected bus usage, safe walking routes, or whether the catchment area realistically supports sustainable travel by bus for staff or students.

Residents have voiced concern over the re-siting of the building and feel this could mitigate some of the concerns if it had been based on the original footprint and expanded. Moving the building has impacted the loss of green space. Furthermore, the Essex Design Guide sets the county wide design principles for building appearance, and the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan applies those principles locally. The Neighbourhood Plan reinforces the EDG by defining South Woodham Ferrers' distinctive character, on a low-rise domestic scale, consistent roof forms, green buffers, and human scale streets, and requires new development to reflect that character. In practice, the EDG provides the rules, and

the Neighbourhood Plan tells you how those rules should look in South Woodham Ferrers.

The proposed Chetwood SEND school does not follow either document. Its massing, roof profile, façade treatment, and overall architectural language are not in keeping with the established street architecture or the surrounding street scene along Shirebourn Vale and Gandalf's Ride. The building presents as a large, monolithic institutional block in an area characterised by modest, domestic scale dwellings with consistent roof pitches, articulated frontages, and soft landscape edges.

Both the EDG and the Neighbourhood Plan expect new development to integrate sensitively with its context, reinforce local character, and maintain human scale proportions. The current proposal does not achieve this and therefore conflicts with the design expectations set out in the Essex Design Guide, the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan, and Chelmsford Local Plan policies on character and appearance.

We welcome the proposal to allow out of hours use for the MUGA and pitch area, but echo residents' concerns over times of operation to minimise noise and disruption to their lives. Who will operate this, and how will it be policed to ensure issues such as traffic and noise are mitigated?

In addition to concerns about design and character, the application provides no SuDS strategy or, if one exists, it is insufficient and fails to demonstrate how surface water will be managed. The plans appear to indicate a potential connection or discharge route towards the Washlands. If this is the intended outfall, the applicant has not provided any modelling, capacity assessment, flow control details, or confirmation that the Washlands can safely receive additional water.

The Washlands operate as a flood storage area, meaning they fill and hold water during periods of heavy rainfall. Any uncontrolled or poorly managed discharge into this system risks increasing water levels at times when the Washlands are already under pressure. This could exacerbate flood risk to nearby residential properties, particularly those downstream and adjacent to the existing drainage network. A larger car park and fill in areas will cause increased run off, but we cannot see how this is accounted for.

Without a full SuDS report, including attenuation volumes, discharge rates, exceedance routing, and confirmation of the receiving system's capacity, the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that the development will not increase flood risk. The proposal therefore conflicts with national SuDS requirements, the Essex SuDS Guide, and Chelmsford Local Plan policies on flood risk and drainage. Have the local ECC staff who operate the area been notified and their guidance sought?

The application also proposes a number of external lighting columns, yet provides no information on operating hours, control systems, dimming regimes, or measures to minimise light spill. Without this detail, the Town Council cannot assess the impact of nighttime illumination on nearby residential properties. The absence of a lighting strategy means there is no evidence that the scheme will avoid excessive glare, upward light spill, or prolonged illumination during sensitive hours. This is particularly important given the proximity of homes along Shirebourn Vale and Gandalf's Ride, where poorly controlled lighting could cause significant amenity impacts.

National and local policy require lighting proposals to demonstrate how light pollution will be minimised, how luminaires will be controlled, and how residential amenity will be protected. As no operating hours, curfew periods, sensor controls, or mitigation measures have been provided, the application fails to meet these requirements and cannot be considered acceptable in its current form.

The application provides no Construction Management Plan and therefore fails to demonstrate how construction activity will be controlled or how impacts on nearby residents will be minimised. There is no information on construction traffic routing, worker parking arrangements, hours of operation, dust suppression, surface water run-off controls, noise management, or measures to prevent disruption to local homes. The absence of a CMP also means there is no commitment to the Considerate Constructors Scheme or any equivalent best practice framework. Without these details, the Town Council cannot assess the potential impacts on residential amenity, local roads, or environmental quality during the construction phase, and the proposal therefore conflicts with national and local requirements for safe, professionally managed construction activity.

The site layout shows a concentration of major plant and life safety infrastructure positioned directly adjacent to the residential boundary, including the sprinkler tank, heating plant, pump room, air-source heat pumps (ASHP), and associated life safety equipment. The application provides no noise impact assessment or acoustic statement, and therefore offers no evidence on expected noise levels, operational hours, vibration, or the cumulative impact of multiple plant units operating in close proximity to homes.

ASHPs, pumps and mechanical plant can generate continuous or intermittent noise, particularly during early morning warm-up cycles and nighttime safety operation. Without a noise report, it cannot be assessed whether the development will cause unacceptable disturbance to neighbouring residents or whether mitigation (acoustic fencing, enclosures, screening, or setback distances) is required. The absence of this information means the proposal fails to demonstrate that residential amenity will be protected. We continue to support the provision of a SEND school but have concerns over the implementation of project.