



*(Registered charity 1105545)*

**Written for the  
School Organisation  
Committee**

**All correspondence to:**

Mr Nitesh Gor

**I-Foundation**

25 Hill Street

Mayfair

London W1J 5LW

Tel: +44 (0)20 7569 1199

Mobile: +44 (0)7717 742 621

Email: [info@i-foundation.org](mailto:info@i-foundation.org)

**19<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

School Organisation Committee  
Room 139  
Legal Services  
Harrow Council  
PO Box 2  
Civic Centre  
Harrow  
HA1 2BR

This document is intended to serve as a response to the objections received by I-Foundation in response to the Statutory Notice published on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2007 for the establishment of a new one-form entry Hindu VA primary school in the London Borough of Harrow.

Objections were received from some local residents and from the William Ellis Action Group. No other local residents groups have objected to the proposal of the 7 contacted. It should be noted that at the time of consultation, there were no residents groups in the immediate area of Camrose Avenue, Broomgrove Gardens etc.

Objections were also received from Stag Lane, Priestmead and the Association of Harrow Governing Bodies – made up of Grange First and Middle Schools, Cannon Lane Middle School, Nower Hill High School and Roxeth Manor First School.

It should be noted that Longfield First and Middle Schools, Elmgrove Middle School and Moriah Jewish Day School are in support of the proposal.

We have identified all the types of objections raised across the different letters received and can confirm that all are captured within the objection raised by the William Ellis Action Group. Hence for convenience we will respond point by point to the William Ellis Action Group letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 2006, which we believe will also address all the other objections brought to our attention. At the end of this document is a summary of other objections received from individuals and schools (not entirely covered by the William Ellis Action Group letter), to which we also provide brief responses.

We would like to point out that many of the objections raised relate to planning issues. We understand that, if SOC were to approve the school's establishment, this would be subject to planning permission being obtained for the site under consideration. Hence, many of the planning related matters will be addressed in due course as part of the planning process and application. We will, however, endeavour to give a response to even the strictly planning related points.

## **1. *Validity of Statutory Notice***

The first point raised is that our Statutory Notice was invalid. The reason given is that no date was specified in the notice. We sought legal advice prior to publishing the notice and can confirm that the language contained within the notice does indeed meet all statutory requirements. To claim that the notice is 'invalid' is factually incorrect. We would invite SOC to contact our specialist educational lawyers for clarification on this matter should you need to: RT Coopers, Telfords Yard, 6/8 The Highway, London E1W 2BS

## **2. *Adequacy of Consultation Process***

The second point of objection raised is in relation to the consultation process. As a preface, we would like to point out that the process for consultation including dates and publication of the notice was designed in close liaison with Harrow Council. We are entirely satisfied that our consultation process was more than adequate to fulfil our statutory requirements.

The consultation for William Ellis took place between Sept 8<sup>th</sup> and October 13<sup>th</sup>, a period of 5 weeks. It should be noted that many of the groups we were required to contact were n had already been contacted in May 2006 for the Pinner Park Farm site. It was therefore thought that a much shorter consultation period would suffice and allow us to meet DfES deadlines. When we received feedback from local schools that they had not had enough time to consult, the period was extended for their benefit. This was done in a spirit of cooperation and engagement with local stakeholders rather than us being either required or 'pressured' into this.

Public consultation events were carried out on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of September and were advertised in local newspapers, Harrow Council's website and local resident groups were informed (please note that the William Ellis Action Group was not formed at that point). This was exactly the same approach we adopted for the Pinner Park Farm.

The public consultations were designed to increase the opportunity for public attendance. These public consultations took the form of public exhibitions – as opposed to the public meetings. Both of these forms are acceptable and we believe the public exhibitions are in fact a better way to engage in dialogue rather than a somewhat impersonal presentation as we experienced with the Pinner Park Farm consultations.

These exhibitions were held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> 12pm to 6pm and Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> 9.30am to 5pm.

The above times were specifically designed so that they would cater for different parts of the community and those who were unable to attend during normal office hours. In total, access to the exhibition spanned 13.5hours – more than the consultations for Pinner Park Farm.

We took both a register and people count of those that attended the consultations. The meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> had 40 people attending with 21 people registering. The meeting

on the 23<sup>rd</sup> had 90 people attending with 82 registering. We believe this represents a good attendance and supports the proposition that the consultation was effective.

The exhibition took the form of 9 (not 4) story boards and were produced and presented in duplicate to facilitate more people. See Appendix 1. The detail contained was as much as we could reasonably be expected to deliver at this early stage in the proposed school's development.

We completely reject the accusation that those attending on behalf of I-Foundation 'had little information to impart and were not fully conversant with the proposals.' The fact is that during these consultations, as with those for Pinner Park Farm, the bulk of queries raised by local residents related to planning issues. The consultation was never intended to be a planning consultation and we therefore did not have all the answers – indeed we still do not have all of the answers – for detailed questions relating directly to planning. We attempted to answer all the questions as completely and openly as possible, but we cannot be expected to have detailed answers with regards to planning before a planning application has even been formulated or submitted.

It was never stated that 'a two form entry school would be built'. It has consistently been our position that we have permission for a one-form entry school and that is what we will look to apply for and build. We have never suggested otherwise. We have also, in the spirit of transparency, been completely open that the building's common areas and infrastructure will be able to cope with a two form entry. We made this explicitly clear once again during the public meeting held by Harrow Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. The claim that the published notice is 'misleading' because we did not mention the distant *possibility* of a two form entry school we think is unfair and ill conceived.

The exhibition at St Anthony's Catholic Church did not close early. It was scheduled to close at 6pm. At 5.45pm, due to a double-booking by the Church's management, we were asked to move the display boards and shift to another part of the hall. This was done and members of I-Foundation continued speaking to those attending. This conversation continued till approximately 5.55pm when the residents left. There were no further attendees that evening. If there were, they would have also had the opportunity to speak to someone.

The consultation packs were distributed to the existing resident groups that we could identify (see Appendix 2) and the two main Harrow publications. This goes further than the statutory requirements. We regret that some local residents were not aware of the consultations, but we did everything according to published guidance and our best efforts – clearly the good attendance shows that it had significant effect.

Simply because the consultation process was not exactly the same for the William Ellis site as it was for Pinner Park Farm, it cannot be claimed that the process was not carried out properly. In fact, we would argue that the William Ellis site consultation was an improvement on the Pinner Park Farm consultation since we had learned from the experience and feedback we received.

Two separate meetings were held, one with the heads of local schools on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and the other with local ward councillors on 29<sup>th</sup> September to ensure that we had their respective feedback.

We believe that the consultation process for the William Ellis site has been robust and comprehensive. Of course there is always room for more consultation and we have always been open to discussion with local residents and others. We have invited discussion on this and continue to do so. We do not believe that any real consultation on such a matter can have a deadline, it is an ongoing process that will continue even if the school is granted permission. However, to meet statutory, process and logistical requirements, consultations are limited in both time and extent. These initial consultations aim to capture the vast majority of issues and concerns held by local stakeholders – and we believe we have done exactly that. We believe we understand what the main issues and concerns are, and have taken those onboard before publishing the notice.

### ***3. Points in Relation to the Prescribed Information Provided by I-Foundation***

i. It is claimed that I-Foundation's bid is not truly representative of the Hindu community. This is a baseless objection. When all the major Hindu organisations within the country are supportive of this proposal, this objection seems very unfair. See Appendix 3. Everyone from the Hindu Council Harrow (with 72 affiliated organisations) to the UK's largest Hindu umbrella organisation, Hindu Forum of Britain and the National Council of Hindu Temples support this proposal. Further, we have the support of the Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden and the local Kenton and Stanmore Swaminarayan temples. Add to this the support of ISKCON, which with the Swaminarayan temple in Neasden represent the major Hindu temples in the UK and outside India. To say that this proposal is not representative of the Hindu community is simply untrue.

ii. I-Foundation's team does have experience in establishing and operating Hindu faith schools in the UK. There are only two independent Hindu schools in the UK – and members of the I-Foundation team were instrumental in establishing and operating both.

iii. We do not believe that our aims for community cohesion and promotion of the environment are 'unachievable'. Faith schools can and should be a mechanism for promoting community cohesion. Of course for this to happen people of different backgrounds and faith have to be willing to accept the co-existence of people of other faith. We believe that whilst this is not true of all, it is true of the majority.

The proposal is designed to promote the environment in a variety of ways (including for example: energy efficiency will be achieved through passive design and building services systems measures; selection of building materials; use of green roofs; the use of renewable energy such as photo voltaics, ground water extraction for cooling; solar thermal heating, biomass fuel; rainwater harvesting; recycling; passive solar heating; and incorporation of learning aids to understand the environment etc. It is important to note that the site is not greenbelt, or a site of special scientific interest. We are confident from our research on the site that we will not be negatively impacting the environment and these findings will form part of any future planning application.

iv. Please see point iii above.

v. The empirical research conducted by I-Foundation was, to our knowledge, the most extensive research ever done on the Hindu community in the UK. A sample of 500 people (the total national sample size was close to 1,900) is more than adequate to represent a population of 40,000. There are national opinion polls done on smaller sample sizes. I-Foundation does not represent ISKCON. I-Foundation is an independent organisation where ISKCON has no jurisdiction. The role of ISKCON is simply to provide advice, which the Directors of I-Foundation and the governors of the school can choose to accept or reject, as they see fit.

vi. This information was submitted to SOC and is attached herein for convenience. See Appendix 4.

vii. The method used to calculate the number of Hindu primary children in Harrow is both an intuitive and a fair one. The population of Hindus in Harrow is 20%. Thus taking 20% of the primary population seems the natural thing to do. Of course, this assumes that the age demographic within the Hindu population is broadly the same as the entire Harrow population. This we think is a fair assumption and if anything, perhaps a conservative estimate. The school has and will continue to attract interest from all parts of the Hindu community so we do not believe this number is in any way misleading. We think that the premise that the school will be over-subscribed is a commonly accepted one and stands up to any rational analysis of the numbers.

viii. The story boards being referred to are in fact the slides that were blown up for presentation purposes. These are attached here for reference. See Appendix 1.

ix. The reply slips received are attached herein. See Appendix 5.

- a. I-Foundation has never received a request from the William Ellis Action Group to make public the results of our site search. We cannot speak for the Council.
- b. I-Foundation engaged commercial agencies to look for a site in September 2005 because a previously identified site fell through. We do not see how September 2005 to the time we began consultation on William Ellis (October 2006) constitutes 'only one month'.
- c. See point b. We cannot make sense of this objection.
- d. I-Foundation has commissioned a Green Travel Plan to be drafted. This will form part of any future planning application.
- e. I-Foundation has never stated that we 'intend' to build a two form entry school. It has consistently been our position that we have permission for a one-form entry school and that is what we will look to apply for and build. We have also, in the spirit of transparency, been completely open that the building's common areas and infrastructure will be able to cope with a two form entry. We made this explicitly clear once again during the public meeting held by Harrow Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October.
- f. The point on surplus places is well taken and has been in our opinion, the main focus of objection from local schools. We have gone to extreme lengths (both restricting the proposal to a one form entry and opening incrementally so as

not to draw current pupils) to minimise impact. We understand the concern from local schools around surplus places. However, we would contend that there is no longer a surplus places rule (so as to encourage parental choice) and that any issues of surplus places can be considered in the school organisation plan for Harrow and that the new proposed Hindu school, approved by Harrow Council in 2005, should rightly form part of that plan along with other local schools. We would hope to work with local schools over any implementation period to help make sure there is minimal impact.

x. See 3.vi above and Appendix 4 as indicated.

#### **4. *Eligibility for School***

Please see point 3.ix (f) above. It is a wholly unfounded objection that the school will only cater to ISKCON followers. Please refer to point 3.i also.

#### **5. *Site Location***

The proposed location is near the cluster of Edgware, Queensbury, Kenton East and Kenton West wards. These four wards have the highest Hindu populations of any wards in the Borough. We could not anticipate a better-suited location in order to cater to the Hindu community.

An objecting point is made about a possible catchment area outside of the Borough. We do anticipate there will be some pupils from outside Harrow. The exact number is difficult to guess at this stage until we have an application procedure in place.

The objection is made that a more ‘ideal’ site should be found. Perhaps, given unlimited time, resources and options, a better site *might* be found. However, we believe the William Ellis site represents a very good site for serving both the local Hindu and non-Hindu communities. It is a good option that is on the table now and one that we believe is viable in terms of planning and accessibility.

As mentioned before, a Green Travel Plan has been commissioned. A draft Green Travel Plan has been submitted to the transport officers at the London Borough of Harrow for their comments, however the Green Travel Plan will be submitted along with any future planning applications. This will contain details on travel modes to the proposed school site, examples of measures being proposed are:

- three minibuses;
- cycle parking;
- priority car share parking spaces;
- Green Travel Plan Coordinator;
- Travel Champions;
- patrolling pedestrian accesses by staff/parents;
- walking buses;
- cycle training for pupils;
- bicycle user group will be set up to teach children how to do basic bicycle maintenance;



- cycling buses (target will aim to encourage their use from year 3 upwards);
- National Walk/Bike to School Weeks;
- showers and locker space available to staff;
- season ticket loans for staff;
- staggered opening times/breakfast club;
- education (pedestrian and cycling training for pupils; school assemblies; visiting speakers in assemblies and individual lessons; posters and promotional information throughout the school; cross-curricular links within lessons);
- information and promotion (school newsletter and prospectus ; public transport maps and public transport maps will be displayed on school notice board and web site; induction packs containing information on public transport, cycling and walking routes to the school; and,
- Personalised Travel Plans

Given that the site is within the heart of the Hindu community, we anticipate a large number of children being able to walk to school – yet another advantage of this specific location.

It is a given that the small number of school places will mean that not all applying pupils will be accommodated. We believe this will be case regardless of site location.

## **6. Planning Issues**

This part of the objection is largely planning related and our proposals will be more fully articulated in this regard through the planning process.

### *Loss of a Green Field Site*

The site is surrounded by houses and is rarely enjoyed by other local residents since it is not visible from the street and has secure access. Many houses surrounding the site have in fact built structures at the back of their gardens which means an already reduced visibility to site.

Policy C7 in the adopted UDP (2004) states that:

*The Council will seek to ensure that appropriate education facilities are provided. In considering proposals for new schools or the expansion of existing ones, the following criteria will be taken into account:*

- A) the local populations and the need for new education facilities in the area;*
- B) accessibility of the site with regards to its catchments areas and to public transport, paying particular regard to ensuring that the site is readily accessible by non-car modes and integrated into the surrounding area;*  
*and*
- C) The availability of safe setting down and picking-up points within the school site.*

The supporting text for this policy states that:

*Because of the particular space needs of school and associated playing fields, it is likely that a new school may, in exceptional circumstances, be located on an existing open space.*

The development plan, therefore, states that schools can in exceptional circumstances be developed on greenfield sites.

#### *Depriving a Local Football Club*

We do however wish to correct some misleading words such as ‘depriving a local youth football club...’. The proposal does in fact have the in-principle support of the youth club (subject to final negotiations on exact land allocations etc). This can hardly be seen as ‘depriving’ them of anything. Belmont Football Club will in effect be getting a number of benefits, not least: secure tenure, new changing facilities, car parking and improved pitches.

Improving the quality of the pitches, may increase the capacity of the club, therefore improving the local football club.

The playing fields are a private facility and not a large public recreational facility as suggested in the objection letter.

The site currently contains 3 junior and 5 adult playing fields. It is noted that the London Borough of Harrow ‘PPG 17 Sports, Recreation and Open Space Study : An Assessment of Quantity Quality and Access’ dated August 2005 found that there is a deficiency of 8 mini and 7 junior pitches in east area; and there is a surplus of 12 senior football pitches. This imbalance could be partially rectified by the re-designation of the senior provision on the site.

#### *Shortage of Green Space*

Text Map 6 in the adopted UDP sets out areas currently lacking a local park (local deficiency area). A small portion to the south of the site is designated as an area currently lacking a local park, i.e. residents live more than 400 metres from a park. However, the majority of the site is not in this designation. This is presumably because the site is located on the opposite side of Camrose Avenue to the Chandos Recreation Ground

#### *Noise, Pollution and Traffic*

We are fully aware of the above issues and have commissioned consultants to advise us. We believe this is an addressable issue and we will be making a complete proposal as part of any future planning application.

### **7. *Role of the School in Promoting Community Cohesion***

Please see point 3.iii. Minority religions in particular have always faced greater opposition in the establishment of faith schools. It is a shame that this is the case. We also look forward to the school playing a vital role in promoting community cohesion. We do not believe that this means giving up the Hindu community’s right to a faith

school. We would hope that community cohesion should be based on mutual respect, understanding and accommodation. One objection letter we received asked us to reconsider the site for the school. In the same paragraph, we were told to consider India as a possible location.

Again, we have met with, and are working with Belmont Football Club to see how the proposal can accommodate both them and the school. We do not anticipate any reduction in their contribution to the local community. Both parties are confident this can be achieved and understand clearly that the proposal will in fact help secure the future of the club.

#### **8. *Planning Application and Harrow's UDP***

We do not accept that this proposal 'contradicts all of Harrow Council's declared UDP policies'. In fact, there is clear indication in the UDP that accepts that there is a shortage of suitable sites for schools and hence, as set out above, there is provision made for new schools to be developed on open space.

The supporting text for Policy C6 (First and Middle Schools) states:

*Although population predictions indicate that pupil level out over the next 15 years, there remains the potential for other development area, such as housing, that could have a major impact on demand. It is unlikely that existing facilities would enable significant expansion to be achieved. There is, therefore, a need to safeguard land already allocated for educational use and, if necessary, to identify new sites to meet additional demand or changes in provision.*

It was on this basis that this site was originally proposed to I-Foundation for the purposes of a school.

Please see point 3.ix (b) and Appendix 6 on our search for alternative sites. We believe it is very unfair to accuse of not having searched for alternative sites.

**Summary of objections received from individuals and our brief responses (excluding letter from William Ellis Action Group):**

***1. Traffic congestion and parking***

We are fully aware of the above issue and have commissioned transport planners to advise us. We believe this is an issue that can be addressed and we will be making a complete proposal as part of any future planning application.

***2. The site is adjacent to 2 boundaries of Brent and Barnet. An (factually incorrect) objection was raised that ‘no consultation took place in these boroughs which have schools within walking distance of the proposed school’***

The consultation process was carried out strictly according to published guidelines. Neighbouring boroughs were informed and given the opportunity to respond. This information is provided in the Prescribed Information pack sent to SOC.

***3. Deterioration of air quality though increased traffic***

The potential environmental impact of the school will be covered as part of any future planning application. It should be noted that this would be the case for any school, on any site.

***4. Site located in a busily built up area that ‘doesn’t need any more construction’***

We believe this is a town planning opinion/objection but would submit that locating the school in a residential area is optimal for a variety of benefits, including the green travel plan, the extended schools agenda etc.

***5. Deterioration of the wildlife that exists on the site***

This is another issue that will be covered as part of any planning application. It should be noted that the school design concept does include using landscaping to encourage wildlife. This will also flow through into the school’s outdoor curriculum. The site is not designated as a site of special scientific interest. The use of the site for playing fields, including mowing the grass, has compacted the ground and has resulted in no wildlife on the site.

***6. Poor site access, resulting in safety and traffic issues***

The site’s access is currently restricted. However, the large frontage of the site (currently blocked by a pavilion building) can easily accommodate a more than adequate access route. Proposed designs will form part of any future planning application.

***7. School to be used for other uses***

Extended school use is clearly part of the broader educational agenda. Any proposed uses of the school outside of school hours will only be determined after due consultation with local cluster groups and through the correct planning process.

## **Summary of objections received from Stag Lane and Priestmead and Association of Harrow Governing Bodies:**

The bulk of the objections revolved around the impact of surplus places, which is covered in our response to the William Ellis Action Group letter. Below are the other objections, based in part on the impact of surplus places:

### ***1. Difficulty in planning for the future as budget is uncertain***

We believe the budgetary implication does not need to be uncertain. Given that this proposed school has been in the planning stages since 2003, we would expect that budgetary implications would have been factored by the appropriate Council department and forecasts made on this basis.

### ***2. Lack of stability owing to employing temporary staff / Strategic planning limited to managing turbulence / High mobility of pupils which has a detrimental impact on raising standards***

The school proposes to open in an incremental fashion and so its impact should be predictable. We have also launched a Register of Interest so that we can better understand where the pupils are likely to be drawn from. This will further help inform strategic planning and help minimise ‘turbulence’.

We are also keen to work with local schools on an ongoing basis to help minimise any impact of surplus places. For example, a key area where this might have effect is in the admissions policy. Clearly, if the admissions policy did not include distance from school as a tie-break, the site location would be inconsequential and we would not have had the same objections from the objecting schools.

Ideally, we would like to arrive at the right balance between an appropriate Green Travel Plan and mitigating any impact on local schools. We are confident that this can be arrived at with good information (that the Register of Interest will provide) and working with the local schools that might be affected. It is an issue that with the right motivation can, in our opinion, be addressed.

### ***3. Lacking consultation process on the need for this school***

The consultation process with the local community has been detailed in our Prescribed Information pack and response to the William Ellis Action Group letter. This includes consultation with local schools and their governing bodies. We appreciate that timing was tight, but all effort was made to accommodate meetings with local schools and the extension of a DfES deadline.

Further consultation has also taken place from Harrow Council itself – which is better commented upon by the Council.

### ***4. With 52 nursery children it would need to be a two form entry***

As nursery places are not linked with school admissions, we do not believe this to be accurate.

***5. The proposed school would not add anything further to the provisions already in place***

We disagree with this. We believe the proposed school would add an entirely new dimension to the educational provision both on a local and on a national level. Simply put, there are no Hindu faith schools. There is no school where there is provision for integrating the teachings of Hinduism within the national curriculum and broader school vision and ethos. This opportunity and provision exists in the UK for every other major faith.

***6. No need for a faith school, it would just further divide the community***

In addition to our above response, we would like to underline that the Hindu community does not want to create division. We do not see why a Hindu school should be seen as divisive. Our vision, aims and ethos of the school are entirely the opposite. We see the school as a wonderful opportunity for community cohesion and feel that this is a very unfair and baseless accusation.

***7. Other brownfield sites are available and more suited***

We are unaware of any suitable, available or viable brownfield sites that were available during our comprehensive site search.

## **Summary Statement**

We would like to make the following closing points:

The importance of the UK's first ever Hindu VA school cannot be underestimated. It will have tremendous impact on the UK's faith school landscape and of course on the entire Hindu community who are awaiting this project. With its unique status as the first Hindu VA school, high academic standards and new facilities, the proposed school will be one more feather in Harrow's educational cap.

Objectors to this proposal are reasoning their arguments on a small number of addressable points. We believe we have responded to objections on the consultation process above and given that we were working with Harrow Council all along, SOC can no doubt take opinion from the Council itself as to whether or not we have consulted sufficiently and met our statutory requirements. SOC is also welcome to contact our legal advisors who also advised us on the statutory notice. Ultimately, we feel we have captured all the issues and we have done everything possible to facilitate the process. Even to the extent of allowing unofficial objections to be presented to SOC as formal objections.

The primary educational concern revolves around surplus places. Whilst understandable, we feel this reasoning goes against current policy guidelines. It would be very unfair to deny the school on the basis of surplus places when in fact the surplus places rule no longer exists and all local authorities are encouraged to promote successful schools even when surplus places exist and parental demand can be proven.

However, and we believe more importantly, there is a strong case to be made that the new school may well have minimal impact on surplus places. This is because we can control admissions policy and since we are proposing to open incrementally, we could work with local schools to see how surplus places could be addressed - for example, allocating a number of spaces that will be selected randomly and not subject to a distance from school tie-break. Clearly this would need to work in tandem with the school's Green Travel Plan, but it is possible over time. Of course objections like this can often be emotive but we feel it is imperative that SOC considers this in line with current policy guidelines and with an objective long-term perspective where we will have sufficient levers to address the surplus places issue.

The primary non-educational concern revolves around planning issues. We are looking to put in a planning application in late January 2007. Much of the detailed planning issues will of course be addressed then and local residents will have another opportunity to present their case through the planning process. For the purposes of SOC, and consideration of the UDP, we believe we have addressed this point sufficiently in that the UDP does make specific allowances for school that will be built on open space. The site is therefore clearly a realistic possibility – the details of which need to go through the correct planning process before any application (permission) can be granted.

There is also another, and frankly more worrying, objection being raised about community cohesion. The idea that community cohesion would be damaged seems



strange. From the Hindu community's perspective, that would certainly not be the case. In fact the school and the Hindu community in general would look to use the opportunity to promote and further community cohesion.

In wards where Hindus are 30-40% of the population, we do not see why community cohesion is being flagged. It seems counterintuitive and implies that perhaps those suggesting the idea that the school would damage community cohesion are taking the stand that community cohesion must be on their terms. If the school is approved and does become established, what would be the reason for deteriorating community cohesion?

We feel that we have conducted the statutory notice process sufficiently, have understood the concerns raised, both planning and educational related, and have made best efforts to address those concerns. We believe the notice meets all relevant guidance and policy – including surplus places and planning – and that SOC should have no hesitation in granting approval.