

18/506656 & 18/506609

Recommendation to Withdraw Both Applications from the Agenda

In light of the exceptional number of objections and interest that has been received in relation to application 18/506656 for the new schools at 'Popesfield', which has now exceeded 600, officers now consider that a decision should not be made during the local election period due to the controversial nature of the application.

The Council has an obligation to minimise the risk that the fair and objective determination of the application may be compromised. Officers acknowledge that Planning Committee members are well aware of the need to be objective but the risk of significant lobbying and/or compromise of the process should be minimised before an election. The significant interest in this application means that making a decision at this time would not minimise this risk.

This position also follows the advice of the Council's Monitoring Officer, who advises that,

"During the lead up to elections, the Council should carefully consider the timing of major decisions on controversial matters and avoid the pre-election period where it is practicable to do so. In light of the significant representations received and to avoid the process being compromised, I would recommend that this application be considered by the Planning Committee following the local election on 2 May."

As application 18/506609 (for an alternative 'nature reserve') is directly related to the application for the schools, it is recommended that this is also withdrawn from the Agenda for the same reasons.

This is officer's recommendation and the final decision lies with the Planning Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

To withdraw applications 18/506656 & 18/506609 from the Agenda