

**BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL  
PROPOSED REBUILDING OF BRENCHLEY & MATFIELD CE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
A STATEMENT TO THE COMMUNITY, 12 April 2019**

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Residents will be aware that the Council has been in correspondence with the Tenax Schools Trust, the parent-body of the School, regarding the Council's concerns about the health and safety issues reported in a Schedule of Condition following inspections of the school premises in September 2017 and December 2018. The Council has recently received a letter from Ian Bauckham, Chief Executive of the Trust, the substance of which is set out below

*The Board [has] concluded that, whilst respecting the entrepreneurialism the project represents, it is not able to support the proposals which have been laid before it because the Board, in considering its fiduciary duties, does not consider that this project is in the best interests of the Trust and the school itself.*

*There are a number of reasons for the stance the Trust Board have taken on this matter, the most important of which are:*

- The conclusions of the survey privately commissioned and paid for by the B21 Community Interest Company are not supported by those from the ESFA's (Education and Skills Funding Agency - an arm of the Department for Education which has responsibility for the academies estate across England) own recent survey - the need for a new-build school is not compelling and maintenance needs of the current site are being managed with proper forward planning, as evidenced by the recent capital grant secured for the school*
- The project is very complex and there are a range of significant risks (financial, legal and logistical) to its safe and efficient delivery*
- It is not clear that there is a strong level of support for the project as a whole across the local community*
- It is not clear that the proposed new site is of at least equal quality to the one currently occupied by the school*

*As I mention above, the comprehensive standard government survey of the school buildings has now taken place. This acknowledges a number of maintenance issues, in particular around some parts of the roof. However, the vast majority of maintenance issues identified are classed either as non-urgent or as relatively low cost to address.*

*The Tenax Schools Trust, as the body responsible for the repair of the building, has already secured one tranche of capital funding of £400,000 to make good inadequacies in the fire safety of the site, and that work has been undertaken. We have made a further capital bid to address specific problems with the roof and await the outcome of that bid from the ESFA. We are committed to continuing to seek funding (whether or not the current bid is successful) to undertake maintenance and repair at the school using the capital bidding routes available to us as a multi-academy trust, and the Board of the Trust is of the settled view that this is entirely achievable over time with or without additional funding.*

The P.C. will be taking up an invitation from Mr. Bauckham to discuss the Board's rationale for its decision, and to hear about the Trust's long-term plans for the School. A report from that meeting will be made available to the community.