

Ms Chantal Brooks
Clerk
Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council
Matfield Pavilion
Matfield Green
Matfield
Kent TN12 7JU
Email- clerk@brenchleypc.org.uk

4th April 2019

Dear Ms Brooks

I write in response to your enquiries about the building at Brenchley and Matfield CE Primary School and the proposals made by the B21 Community Interest Company for its relocation.

My apologies once again for the delays in responding to you. This was due to the timing of the Tenax Schools Trust Board meeting at which this item was due to be discussed and a position reached enabling me to reply more fully.

The Board 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

You raised some concerns specifically about the school buildings on the current site, and their maintenance. 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.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Parish Council to talk about this matter further or offer more detail either on the rationale for our decisions with regard to the relocation proposal or to discuss our planning for ongoing maintenance. Please do let us know if you would like this to be arranged.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I R Bauckham' with a trailing flourish.

I R Bauckham
CEO Tenax Schools Trust