

## **Gamlingay Community Centre (The EcoHub). Requested use by parents and carers of pupils attending the Gamlingay Village Primary School to use the Community Centre Car Park for child drop off/pick up**

The Gamlingay Village Primary School is a reincarnation of the Gamlingay Village College following a £3.2m refurbishment and expansion programme. The new school will open on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

Despite the best endeavours of the current Gamlingay First School Governors, and the Gamlingay Parish Council to lobby the Cambridgeshire County Council, the new school has not been provided with a drop off/pick up car park.

Some 65% of Gamlingay children who will attend the Gamlingay Village Primary School live to the west of Mill Street and Waresley Road and the Gamlingay 'cross road'. This percentage will increase with the planned redevelopment of the Wale's industrial site and the land south of West Road. In addition c75 children from outside the immediate village, have already been registered to join the new school in January. Some from the Hatleys, Cinques, the Heath, but also from as far afield as Biggleswade, Sandy, Potton and even Bassingbourn. All these children will be transported to school by car.

The Cambridgeshire County Council has a Policy to not provide child drop off/pick up parking at Primary Schools, because it is adjudged to be dangerous.

A formal request has been received by the Trustees of the Gamlingay Community Centre (EcoHub) to allow parents to drop off their children and pick up their children from the Community Centre car park. This request is being supported by Gamlingay's elected County Council Councillor and Gamlingay's elected South Cambridge District Councillor. It appears that while the County Council has a policy that refuses to provide drop off / pick up parking at primary schools as it is dangerous, the County Council is quite happy to pass this dangerous risk on to the Community Centre Car Park and other parking places in the village, as well as our already congested streets.

The Trustees of the Gamlingay Community Centre have debated the request and have a number of concerns, in addition to this apparent willingness on the part of Cambridgeshire County Council to pass the risk to the Trustees. The Gamlingay Parish Council, which owns the Community Centre have also debated the request and have clearly indicated that the Parish Council is not in agreement with the proposal.

The Trustees of the Community Centre's concerns:

- 1 There is clearly a risk of an accident happening in the car park. Children and cars do not mix well. In addition there will be a conflict of interest between Child drop off/pick up, and users of the Community Centre who expect to be able to park. At the time the Community Centre was refurbished and expanded, an essential requirement was sufficient parking for users.
- 2 The Trustees (The Gamlingay Community Centre is a registered charity) hold a 60 year lease of the Community Centre, the access road, the car park and the foot paths around the building. As such, the Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and repair and insurance of the whole site.

The Lease is very clear in terms of the use of the site. The Community Centre Building is to be used for Community activities which are quite clearly set out in Town & Country Planning Use Class Order, and the access road, car parking and

footpaths are integral to supporting and facilitating these community uses. If the Trustees agree to the access road and car parking areas being used by people not actually using the building and accommodation, the Trustees will be in Breach of the lease terms.

- The car park is not designed for frequent vehicle use and the drop off/pick up proposal will undoubtedly increase the wear and tear on the car parking bays, the paths and curbs and the asphalted access-way. To put this into context, the budget set for maintaining all of the above is £10,000 for the next 24 years (£416 per annum)
- The Trustees have spoken to their Insurers who provide Public Liability cover of £10m. This is to cover claims made against the Trustees by the general public in relation to any accidents or damage to people or possessions, resulting from alleged negligence on the part of the Trustees. In the event that the Trustees agree to the child drop off/pick up request, the insurers will require a full risk assessment to be carried out and, irrespective of this assessment's findings, will insist on the car park being patrolled at drop off and pick up times. The school has indicated a refusal to provide patrolling saying "not our problem". In addition there is likelihood that the insurance premium payable by the Trustees will increase
- The Community Centre opens 0900 Monday to Friday and this is one of the busiest times in the Community Centre car park as booked users and customers arrive and park. At 0900 the gates to the car park are opened. An influx of child drop off vehicles at 0845, will without doubt, cause problems and potentially result in the centres users not being able to park. It must be remembered that for younger pupils, they must be accompanied into the school so, it is not just drop off and go, pick up and go. Cars will be parked for a period of time. The Community Centre staff start work at 0900 and prior to that, there is no management of the centre or the car park.

The Trustees are aware of other Community Centres in Cambridgeshire where similar drop off parking has been imposed on them, and bookings/income has dropped as a result.

- The Community Centre has CCTV coverage but the majority is inside the building or monitoring external doors and windows. There is minimal coverage of the car park. The Trustees believe that a very significant increase in the number of traffic movements in the car park will inevitably result in accidents, or abuse of the car park i.e. cars parked on curbs and footpaths or in disabled parking bays, and additional CCTV coverage will be required. This has been researched and will need a significant upgrade of the CCTV system as well as at least two additional cameras mounted on poles. The Trustees do not have a budget or funds for this substantial work.
- 1500 to 1600 Monday to Friday is a less busy time in the Community Centre car park except for instances of Corporate Business bookings when the car park is likely to be full of customer's cars. However the risk of accident

issues, the wear and tear issues, Public Liability Insurance issues, CCTV inadequacy and car park patrolling, all still apply in the afternoon

- There is an additional risk which needs to be considered. In winter weather conditions, foot paths and car parks can be very slippery and dangerous even though the School may have decided that conditions do not warrant the school being closed. The Trustees cannot accept any liability for accidents (people or vehicles) occurring in these conditions in relation to the access road, the parking areas and foot paths. In addition, the Gamlingay Parish Council will not accept any liability for accidents (slips and falls) in relation to the foot path that crosses the western side of the playing fields between the Community Centre and the Skate Park, and onwards to the school gate.

The Trustees of the Gamlingay Community Centre fully understand the pressures on parents to get their children safely to and from school and the fact that this will often involve the use of a car. The Gamlingay Village Primary School's travel plan asks parents to encourage their children to walk, bicycle or scooter to school, and in so doing reduce road congestion, parking issues and improve physical fitness of the children.

**After much debate it has been agreed by the Trustees that they are not prepared to allow the Community Centre car park to be used for school child drop off or pick up. The Trustees believe that the risk of an accident and significantly increased wear and tear of the parking bay surfaces, the road ways, curbs and pathways is not acceptable. The latter will increase costs as will a potential increase in the insurance premium and the cost of upgrading the CCTV system and new cameras. The School/Cambridgeshire County Council are not prepared to support these additional costs**

The Trustees sincerely hope that parents of pupils attending the new school, which will clearly be fantastic new asset to Gamlingay, will understand the issues around child drop off /pick up in the Community Centre Car Park. After all, the County Council policy is to not allow the latter on primary school sites, because it is adjudged to be dangerous.

The Trustees have the support of the Parish Council in this decision and in early January is scheduled to review and debate other possible car parking options in the village for school drop off/pick up, to assist with the issue.

Trustees to the Gamlingay Community Centre

January 2019