# Plans for new SEN school in Farcet rejected over road safety concerns



Plans to construct a new school for children with special educational needs (SEN) have been refused due to concerns over road safety and accessibility. The proposed Conquest Drove SEN school, intended to serve up to 25 young people aged seven to 18 with learning disabilities, was set to be located on Conquest Drove in Farcet. The project was put forward by Danex Properties Ltd.

The school was designed as a one-storey facility aimed at providing much-needed SEN support in the Huntingdonshire and Peterborough areas. Danex Properties described the project as a “unique facility” that would address a gap in the region’s educational provision.

However, Huntingdonshire District Council declined to grant planning permission, citing insufficient information to ensure the development would not cause “detrimental impacts on highway safety.” The decision was later upheld by a planning inspector after the developer lodged an appeal against the council’s refusal.

The planning inspector highlighted significant concerns over the site’s accessibility. The location’s single-track road nature was considered unsuitable for the volume and type of traffic expected. The inspector noted that the school would likely rely heavily on car transportation, as many pupils would be unable to walk or cycle to the site.

An important point raised was the limited availability of parking and drop-off spaces. The scheme included only eight parking spaces, two visitor spaces, and a minibus drop-off zone. However, no designated area was available for parents or carers to safely drop off or pick up students. This, the inspector said, could lead to hazardous situations with vehicles reversing onto the main carriageway or parents waiting on the road, impeding traffic flow and raising safety risks.

The inspector detailed, “There is no drop off/pick up area for parents/carers vehicles proposed in the scheme, which means that once entering the site, drivers may have to reverse back out onto the carriageway and other parents may be forced to wait on the road while the vehicle leaves the site. Alternatively, drivers may park on the road for a short time and then use the access to turn round, reversing back onto the carriageway. Either way, this raises highway safety concerns.”

It was further noted that approximately 40% of the students might be transported via minibus, yet around 15 pupils would still need private car transport. Alongside staff vehicles, this level of traffic was deemed unacceptable for Conquest Drove given its road infrastructure.

The planning inspector acknowledged the potential benefits of situating a school in a quiet countryside setting for certain children but stated this did not override the safety and accessibility issues. The inspector also mentioned a lack of evidence regarding the specific local demand for this type of school. Additionally, they referenced council information indicating plans to increase special education provision and reduce dependency on independent special schools, except where already established or in exceptional circumstances.

In conclusion, the inspector dismissed the appeal to overturn the council’s refusal, citing that the site was unsuitable for the development, primarily due to the road safety and accessibility concerns.

The Cambridge News is reporting that the refusal reflects an emphasis on the practical challenges of integrating specialised educational facilities within rural or less accessible areas, with authorities prioritising road safety and infrastructure readiness in their decision-making.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.hcrlaw.com/news-and-insights/planning-permission-for-development-next-to-sen-school-quashed/> - This article discusses a case in Kent where planning permission for a residential development adjacent to a special educational needs (SEN) school was quashed due to concerns over noise, highway safety, and air quality impacts on the school's pupils, highlighting the importance of considering the heightened sensitivity of SEN students in planning decisions.
2. <https://childrenslawcenter.org/our-impact/education/the-district-fails-to-provide-transportation-for-students-with-disabilities/press-release-parents-and-students-with-disabilities-can-continue-their-fight-for-safe-and-reliable-transportation/> - This press release details a legal case in Washington, D.C., where parents and guardians of children with disabilities are challenging the District of Columbia for failing to provide safe and reliable transportation to school, emphasizing the critical role of transportation in ensuring equal access to education for students with disabilities.
3. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/teen-school-disabled-accessibility/2021/05/05/adfe3176-adc5-11eb-b476-c3b287e52a01_story.html> - This article covers a student's advocacy for improved accessibility at her high school, highlighting the challenges students with disabilities face in accessing education due to inadequate facilities and the importance of addressing these issues to ensure equal educational opportunities.
4. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/S9636> - This legislative bill in New York State proposes requiring a review of school safety plans for traffic and transportation issues before issuing building permits for new or expanded school facilities, underscoring the importance of addressing transportation and safety concerns in school planning.
5. <https://www.qcnews.com/news/investigations/the-longest-ride/the-longest-ride-south-carolina-lawmaker-wants-to-force-sc-school-districts-to-put-attendants-on-all-special-needs-buses/> - This article reports on a South Carolina lawmaker's proposal to mandate adult attendants on all special needs buses, following incidents where students with disabilities were harmed due to the absence of such attendants, highlighting the critical need for safe transportation for SEN students.
6. <https://www.change.org/t/saferoutestoschool-en-us> - This petition advocates for improved pedestrian safety measures around schools, emphasizing the necessity of safe routes for students, particularly those with disabilities, to access education without the risk of injury.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMikgFBVV95cUxPeFVueWtGYUd1aUdhOWF0VFJoTklhbEJmWGJ6cGNtWGszNlR2NGJlVW56MnNIZHBDQkx5aC04ZFVvM2M1cWtSWHRPZWNUQzFyd0ZBdExwU29Bb3hMRFZ0UVhQcUp1RFU4RDBrRmhjOWFaRFBHdmIwa25NWnZBNDZLVW5lc2hZelBfMFdXTldMNkNLQdIBlwFBVV95cUxNbkJyNkVUOGI4MHdMaUVrOTUtNkVORXJRdDdYeVFQNEVYQWRqRGFmWm1sMElBV2VoSkZWMkxWeW9DdFM2SUg0MXpZNko5UmVaeEZYQ0dsY29UR2JKdmlkV2lXRWdwOHcxNUF3VGxBNFpaendzTG1iSFpKaTBieWI5NGlrb3N6NkZvNm82dy1jdlNWYzUwbWpz?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data