



CHESTERHOUSE



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BOARD BULLETIN

2 December 2011

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Parents

The Board of Governors of Chesterhouse School is very pleased that finally, after so many years, the approval from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning has come through for the development on the Uitkamp site, which includes an allocated 8.8 hectares for Chesterhouse School. This approval came through on 24 November and there is a period when objections can be lodged with the Minister. Persons wishing to appeal against this development must first lodge an intent to appeal 20 days from 24 November and then the formal appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the lapsing of the abovementioned 20 day period.

We know and have already seen some of the objections that have been posted on a number of websites and our school's management met with the representatives of the Durbanville Community Forum on Monday evening. The only way in which we can see the speedy and successful resolution of all the objections is to have more support for the Uitkamp development in written form and on social media and for this we ask for your help. The Chesterhouse School Facebook page has an article on the development and all you have to do is LIKE the article; the School Association has their own Facebook page too called the Chesterhouse Parents Forum. There is a specific email address landactioncampaign@chesterhouse.co.za where emails can be sent in support of the development.

In the past we have spoken to our parents at the Parent Forums that are held at the school after the board meetings and would like to summarise the process that we have been through in ensuring that we find land for the school. We also need to emphasise that the decision to back the Uitkamp development is one that we have thoroughly deliberated and was not one motivated by any other need than finding land for the growth of Chesterhouse.

The process began about seven years ago with Steven Chester realising that the very quick growth of the initial Chesterhouse School was indicative of two things – the need for quality, independent education in Durbanville and the northern suburbs of Cape Town and the fact that there are not enough schools in this area which can accommodate all children living in the northern suburbs especially where education is English medium.

In order to summarise the lengthy process that we have been through, the best is to say that the initial offer was a site on Altydgedacht Estate. We signed an Offer to Purchase about 6 years ago and after being told that we cannot build on Altydgedacht we asked the authorities then to find us a piece of land in Durbanville where we could build a school. The habitual sending us from pillar to post began then and after looking at land on a site opposite Poplars Restaurant, the Aurora Shopping Centre and Kenridge, there was nothing that the provincial authorities could give us that was adequate to build a high school on. All along we were aware of the Uitkamp development and kept it in the back of our minds as an option. It is very clear to all of us who have children at the school, who work here or who have any affiliation to Chesterhouse that we need premises on which to ensure that our children have the basic right to an adequate, holistic education which includes sports fields, playing fields and space for Junior School laboratories, adequate library facilities and importantly an Early Years Development Centre which requires a specialist design to afford our little ones an international and world class start to their school life. We cannot wait for provincial officials and politicians to decide where we can build – our children's futures are now and it is imperative that land for Chesterhouse happens now.

Our only option now is the Uitkamp development – that is the reason for the support of this development. Many have asked if we considered everything and anything that goes with such a development – the impact to the environment, to the municipal amenities, to the increased traffic and to the socio-economics; our answer to those is a definitive yes!

We have been looking at all these issues for the past two years at least; this is not a recent set of findings that we have embarked on.

- Attempts by the developer in the last number of years have been rejected – this is not true. No application was ever rejected for the Uitkamp development; the process was delayed as individuals requested verification of previous studies conducted on various issues of the land.
- There are other plans that are different to the one that has been extensively shown in all publications to the public. This is not the case at all; the plans that were shown by the developer to the Chesterhouse parents meeting are the plans that have been approved by the government departments. These cannot be changed.
- The agricultural tests that have been conducted have been challenged and the soil is fine for agricultural activity – not true. The Department of Agriculture accepted two different agricultural reports submitted in 1995 and 2003, both of which determined that the land is no longer agricultural land.
- The law is that every development must have a low cost housing facility included; although a noble cause, there is no such law in place yet and as a school we have every intention of ensuring that the local farm schools benefit from our new school premises.
- There is concern that soil dumping is already occurring on the site immediately next to Vissershok Road and Odendaal Road; Clara Anna Fontein is a farm where soil dumping often occurs. These areas have been marked for landscaping and the soil that has been dumped is to improve the quality of the existing soil.
- The sewerage problem in Durbanville will worsen with the development adding another 700 households to the area; this has been resolved and improved with a new bulk sewer line across the Clara Anna Fontein farm. The pump station in the Uitkamp Wetlands has been eradicated to prevent any spillage and new capacity has been created at the Bellville Waste Water Treatment works.
- The traffic problems will increase with this development; unfortunately the whole of the Western Cape has increased traffic problems. Whether the development was built or not, Vissershok Road alone will continue to ensure increased traffic; the owner of Clara Anna Fontein has paid in double his Development Contribution towards the improvement of roads in Durbanville. We believe that this is in the region of R20 million.

The situation is such – there is no land for us anywhere else and no one person or group of people in government have given us a solution. The task became ours to handle and the only solution is that we support the Uitkamp Development and build a school soon. Waiting for a solution will mean that we may wait many more years and still have no guarantees or land on which to build the Senior School. This has been our only motivation.

The appeals objecting to this development must be with the minister within a total of 50 calendar days – this is how the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning calculates their dates. This means that appeals will close on 13 January 2012 according to our calculations. We have to ensure that we speak with one voice and for every one objection we should and must have at least two letters, or emails or Facebook posts in support of the development. If more people object and less support, the process will be stalled once again. We cannot afford this for the sake of our children.

Let's ensure the future of our school.

Ari Spanellis

DEPUTY CHAIR : BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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