

School in greenbelt gets the green light

Burchetts Green: Parish council loses £20,000 fight to block new build

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SPEED READ: Plans for Beech Lodge School to build a new campus on land north of Maidenhead Thicket have been given the green light following an appeal. The scheme was originally approved by the Royal Borough in October 2014.

A LONG-RUNNING dispute over construction of a school on greenbelt land looks to have finally been resolved after a ruling was issued by the Government.

Parents, staff and pupils of Beech Lodge School, which describes itself as a school for children 'whose needs cannot be met in mainstream education', have been celebrating after plans for a purpose-built campus were approved.

Proposals for a new site on land off the Henley Road, north of

Maidenhead Thicket, were originally approved by the Royal Borough in October 2014.

However, opposition to the scheme led to it being called in by the Government's Planning Inspectorate and a public enquiry was held.

This heard submissions at Maidenhead Town Hall in January from the school and its opponents, represented by Bisham Parish Council and the Burchetts Green Village Association.

Since then, both sides have been waiting for a decision.

It was due to be announced in May but was put on hold due to a 'purdah' enforced on Government departments during the run-up to the EU referendum.

Following the announcement on Friday, school founder Daniela Szmigielska Shanly, said she was 'delighted'.

"We put all the information in the most straightforward way we could and the inspector

was able to take that and go with it.

"I think what we do now is look at everything with our planning people. They're looking to work out a schedule but I can't say how long that will take - the conditions are important things to get right."

Asked whether steps would be taken to repair relationships with the parish council following the appeal, she said: "We've always said we want to work with the community.

"From the start, I attended parish council meetings and said I wanted them to be involved and I hope they take up that offer to work with us."

Cllr Mandy Robson Brown, who was chairman of the parish council when it decided to allocate £20,000 to fight the application, declined to comment on the decision.

Cllr Alan Keene, the current chairman, said: "All I can say is that, as far as I can tell, the due process has been followed and a decision has been made - whether I agree or not is ancient history."

APPROVED: An artist's impression of the new Beech Lodge School campus.

