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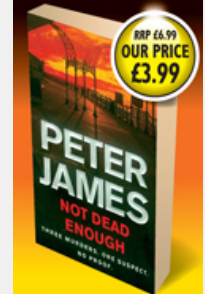
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## PETER JAMES

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## Fundamentalist Christians plan school in rural Sussex

By *Jess Bauldry*

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An evangelical Christian movement has unveiled plans to build a secondary school in a village.

The South Downs Education Trust, which has links to The Plymouth Brethren, found favour with Horsham District Council who supported plans to build an independent school in Ashington.

The school is planned for land north of Ashington, near Horsham, and would take 60 children aged 11 to 17.

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Since April 2004 it has been run from portable cabins at the Brinsbury College Campus, at North Heath, Horsham, but its lease expires in July next year.

The proposal was recommended for rejection by Horsham District Council planning officers but councillors voted in favour subject to a legal agreement.

The decision has angered people living in the village, who claim it contradicts planning policies agreed earlier this year.

The Plymouth Brethren began in Ireland in the late 1820s before splitting into two main branches, the Open Brethren and Exclusive Brethren.

The Exclusive Brethren are thought to number around 40,000 worldwide, and are headed by a Sydney businessman, Bruce Hales, who is called the Elect Vessel and the Man of God.

As their name suggests, the group practices a strict separation from the world, generally associating only with each other and avoiding outside influences such as TV and the internet.

Ashington Parish Council chairman John Berry said Horsham District Council banned any developments outside the village boundary unless it could be proven to bring benefits to the community.

He said: "We're astounded in as much as the policies which were brand new in Spring this year have been broken at the first attempt to test them.

"I know the school and council have been looking for a site for some time. But, the council should have realised then that this proposal wouldn't match the policies and they should have told the school to look again.

"They are trying to prove it will bring benefits to the community by building a doctors' surgery and chemist. We've had a surgery in the sports pavilion but there was no call and the doctor ceased coming.

"We've also got someone in the village with a licence for a chemists but she wants a property in the village. It is too dangerous to build something like that outside the village on the site they're proposing.

"There's not really anything they can provide."

The Trust hopes to construct two buildings on the site on Billingshurst Road. One building will house the arts, crafts, textiles wing and two classrooms, and the second would include science rooms, six classrooms and offices.

The school at the Brinsbury College campus attracts students from Horsham and Broadbridge Heath and Arun, Adur and Mid Sussex districts.

Coun Berry said in three years half the students would be drawn from Horsham but the school attracted no students from Ashington.

Ashington resident John Sabin, of Billingshurst Road, said the school did not meet any local needs and would not benefit education standards in the county.

He said: "I'm not saying these people shouldn't be allowed to have a school but they must take their chances with everyone else.

"They've got a few pupils in Horsham. Why not find a site in Southwater?"

"Why overturn policy in favour of a faith school which won't benefit education standards in West Sussex unless you belong to this very strict christian denomination?"

"Why are we going out of our way to help an organisation which may be doing a good job in its own lights but doesn't have any benefit to the local community?"



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Should the school be allowed in Ashington? Have your say below.

12:36pm Tuesday 27th November 2007

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Posted by: The Roman, Hove on  
12:50pm Tue 27 Nov 07

Feed them to the lions!!

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Posted by: god, as a dad on 1:14pm Tue 27 Nov 07

Jesus had no education and he turned out ok.

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Posted by: Mr F Brimstone, Brighton on  
1:40pm Tue 27 Nov 07

I take it with a name like Exclusive Bretheren they're not looking for any more members.

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Posted by: Sassy, Hove on 1:43pm Tue 27 Nov 07

'Elect Vessel' I hope the journalist didn't mishear that, you know what these cult leaders are like

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Posted by: jon, london on 1:46pm Tue 27 Nov 07

I know this sort of thing can make people cross but i'd advise people not to get hung up about it.

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Posted by: R Dawkins, Here on 1:47pm Tue 27 Nov 07

Poor kids. What next, Tory nurseries and Lib Dem preschool?  
Let them make their own minds up about religion.

You can no more have a Christian child than a Tory child.

[Quote](#) | [Report this post](#)

Posted by: Dr Phlange, The high ground on  
2:03pm Tue 27 Nov 07

**R Dawkins** wrote:

Poor kids. What next, Tory nurseries and Lib Dem preschool? Let them make their own minds up about religion. You can no more have a Christian child than a Tory child.

I'm with you Mr Dawkins. On the rare occasion I was at home on a hot Saturday afternoon last July, I was visited by a group of Jehova's Witnesses, including 2 young children dressed in suits. It saddened me to think of these poor young boys being dragged around house to house when they should have been playing freely with other children the same age. I'm pretty sure if God was looking down he would tell these parents to stop being so ridiculous and allow their children to be children.

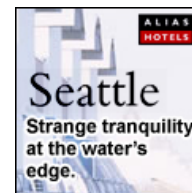
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Posted by: Paul, Worthing on 3:39pm Tue 27 Nov 07

Funny you should mention the JW's, Dr Phlange - can't say I've seen much of them since all that hoo-hah up in the Midlands not long back. Wouldn't have thought they'd let a bit of bad publicity widdle on their bonfire.

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Posted by: Spkon, 711-403 on 4:50pm Tue 27 Nov 07



**Dr Phlange** wrote:

**R Dawkins** wrote:  
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I agree. My next-door neighbour has enrolled his little tykes at KKK school. As adorable as they look in their little pointy hats, I'm starting to resent the nightly display of burning crosses in the playground across the road and the lynchings are becoming tiresome.

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Posted by: [Dirtdogs](#), Brighton on [5:03pm Tue 27 Nov 07](#)

As Long as those Ashington tossers don't create havoc on the A24 I won't mind.

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Posted by: [Town Crier](#), London on [6:02pm Tue 27 Nov 07](#)

Visit [peebs.net/](#) to get a view of what you are in for.

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Posted by: [lyn](#), queensland on [2:14am today](#)

Oppose the EB starting a school. Next thing they will want govt funding and lots of it!!!!

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Posted by: [Dave](#) on [4:29am today](#)

If the government supports this its supporting intolerance .The world needs more inclusive ! not exclusive

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