In response to public concerns Cambridgeshire County Council has made arrangements to remove nets from 18 trees at Highfield Special School in Ely where it is managing a scheme to extend the school and provide children and young people with complex needs with significantly improved accommodation.

We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously and always seek the advice of ecologists to ensure that the impact on wildlife of our building projects is minimised. This is the first time that we have used tree netting and whilst we have no evidence of birds being harmed we have made the decision to act on the concerns of local residents and remove the nets during the Easter school holidays.

We are also aware that the school has received a number of letters from people expressing concerns and we want to make sure that the school’s good relationship with the local community isn’t compromised.

We have submitted a planning application to remove the trees, which is due to be determined later in the spring. In compensation 22 new trees will be planted and new habitats created including native hedgerows, shrub beds and bat and bird boxes.

The extension will provide much-needed new facilities including a new hydrotherapy pool, sports hall and fitness suite. There will also be a new space for pre-school age children and a centre to provide life skills and therapy for young adults with Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties between the ages of 19 and 25 – the first for Cambridgeshire.