

Spencerswood Primary School – Reserved Matters Planning Application

Energy and Sustainability Note (November 2024)

David Smith – WBC Development Team

The outline planning permission for the development was approved in 2014; at which time there was a requirement imposed against the primary school sub phase to, as a minimum: 1) secure a 10% reduction in carbon emissions above the minimum requirements of Part L: Building Regulations; and 2) be designed to achieve BREEAM 'very good' certification. The planning requirements are reflective of the planning policies in place at the time of determination.

In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) members unanimously declared a climate emergency. The declaration commits WBC to do as much as possible to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Subsequently, the council published its first Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). The CEAP establishes 9 key priority areas and 91 actions to mitigate carbon emissions and work towards our 2030 goal.

CEAP Action 6.5 commits to the Council building all new development to carbon neutral standards. This commitment is already being incorporated into the Local Plan Update and draft policies contained therein. In addition, as per action 6.5.1 of the CEAP, the Council has committed that “all new council properties non-residential will be built to the highest efficiency standards”.

In light of the Council commitments under the CEAP, the Council will work with the appointed contractor through the detailed design stage to ensure that the highest efficiency standards are achieved. Rather than fix the design strategies at this stage, in order to fully explore opportunities to exceed the 2014 requirements it is proposed that detailed strategies be worked through, finalised and agreed with the LPA pre-construction.

Such matters could reasonably be dealt with via planning conditions, as are common conditions on developments of this nature. Moreover, pre-commencement planning conditions would ensure that the LPA retains sufficient oversight and control to ensure, at a minimum, compliance with the 2014 planning condition requirements – whilst at the same time offering opportunity for the Council to utilise the design expertise of a construction contractor to explore if better outcomes can reasonably be achieved.