

Joanna Carter

From: Piers Brunning
Sent: 04 December 2024 12:15
To: Joanna Carter
Subject: RE: 242421 Land to the north of School Road, Arborfield Cross

Hi Joanna

My comments, on behalf of Children's Services are:

"From the perspective of Children's Services, the most significant impact of new residential development is on the number of children living in an area. The Council has a number of interests in the distance and ease of travel between homes and education provision, including school run traffic, home to school transport costs and the ability of children to take full advantage of each school's out of school hours offer. The extent of the area of interest increases as children age, because older children are able to travel longer distances by sustainable modes of travel and because the most effective school size increases as children age from the primary phase (4 to 10) to the secondary sector (11 to 15).

The number of children the new development would provide homes for would be dependent on (amongst other factors) the development mix, in terms of the bedroom size mix and the tenure of the homes, and so cannot be calculated reliably for this application. That said, as a small development, the initial impacts are likely to be in the order of 30 additional primary children (c. 4.5 per year group) and 15 statutory secondary age children / c.3 children per year group (although in time the higher number of primary school age children will age into the secondary sector). This number of additional children is too low to justify investment in an individual school and would normally be aggregated into a larger development. Accordingly, if mitigation was through a S106 agreement this would need to enable investment in schools across a wide area and not just at the Coombes School.

On entry to school most children are expected to be able to walk up to 2 miles to school by a safe walking route. This is the statutory walking distance under S508B and Schedule 35B Education Act 1996. There are two schools that meet the relevant criteria, the Coombes CoE Primary School, immediately adjacent to the site, and the Farley Hill Primary School, in the Arborfield Green development.

Currently the Coombes CoE Primary School (the Coombes School) is undersubscribed, but the Farley Hill Primary School is fully subscribed with children originating in the Arborfield Green development and immediately adjacent communities. Although the Coombes School is undersubscribed, it is reasonably anticipated that the number of permitted but unbuilt new homes in the Arborfield Green and associated Finchwood Park developments will create a future requirement for additional school places (in addition to the unfilled capacity at the Coombes School). Appropriate mitigation of the impact of this development would be through CIL, or, if it was judged that this would be required to fund other infrastructure costs, through a S106 agreement to defray additional capital costs.

By the time children transition to the secondary phase children will be expected to walk up to 3 miles to school by a safe walking route. There is only one school within walking distance of this development, the Bohunt Wokingham School. This school is normally fully subscribed with children living in the vicinity of the school. The further growth of the Arborfield Green / Finchwood Park developments is likely to reduce the area this school serves further, serving a community who have no other secondary school within walking distance of their homes. The Council has agreed to fund and manage a scheme to expand the capacity of the Bohunt Wokingham School by 30 places per year. Site limitations mean that further significant expansion may not be achievable on that site, and there are no grounds to believe this will extend the effective catchment area (the area from which the school recruits children who have no special need or priority to attend the school) to include homes that are within walking distance of alternative provision. It is proposed therefore, that if development were to be permitted it would be subject to (a) a S106 agreement to defray additional costs (if it

was judged that no CIL monies were available) and (b) this would be conditioned on the availability of another secondary school site (not Bohunt Wokingham) within walking distance of the development that could accommodate the additional children that it would generate.

It is noted that the new development is close to the Coombes School. This is not though judged to be a material issue, as many school boundaries are closer to residential development than is proposed here.”

Hope this helps

Kind regards

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