Planning Application 261695: Luckley House School, Luckley Road, Wokingham

Submitted by: Fiona Graham

I wish to object to the above planning application on the grounds set out below.

1. Countryside Development

   The site is designated as countryside, but the application fails to evidence that the proposed development is necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

   For example, the application does not describe whether alternatives to this development of countryside have been identified and evaluated. Collaboration with other schools and/or use of the forthcoming Gray's Farm Sports Hub seem obvious candidate alternatives.

   The plans do not appear reasonable nor proportionate given the attempt to intensely pack athletics, rugby and cricket pitches into the site directly in front of the existing houses and gardens. This leads to issues of sporting participants' safety, noise, visual impact on the neighbourhood and the threat of incursion of balls into neighbouring properties.

   Any benefit of the development appears to accrue solely to the private school, not the wider community.

2. Visual Impact of the Acoustic Screen

   There is no evidence provided to support the claim that the 3.5m acoustic fence will have no intrusive effect upon neighbouring properties outlook.

   There are no verified viewpoints, photomontages, cross-sections nor visual amenity assessment from Hart Dyke Close.

   I believe that the screen will be oppressive and over-bearing and have a significantly adverse impact on amenity.

3. Change to the character of the site

   The site is currently - and has been for at least the 30 years I have lived here - an undeveloped grass field. Maintenance of the field has at most consisted of a mowing once per year around July or August. This year, the mowing has not taken place, other than for a tiny patch.

   Given that the plans will transform the undeveloped grass field through the introduction of two rugby pitches, a cricket square, athletics track, boundary fencing, ball-stop netting, a 3.5m acoustic screen and an access infrastructure, it is likely that the 'man on Clapham omnibus' would conclude the character has profoundly changed for the worse.

4. Landscape Assessment

   There is no evidence provided to support the claim the character of the landscape will be preserved.

   There is little assessment of the cumulative visual effect of the acoustic screen, ball-stop netting, goal-posts, fencing, and the new access infrastructure, and the transition between the existing school buildings and the adjoining countryside.

5. Noise

   The plan's need to include the obtrusive acoustic screen as a substantial engineered structure is an admission that the increased noise levels will be significant.

   Even with the overbearing eyesore screen, noise is likely to permeate over it and remain intrusive. As an example from my property's perspective, the plans indicate the start finish straight runs close to and parallel with garden boundaries. This means there will be intense bouts of administrator and spectator noise at focussed points. In addition to the shouts, screams, and whistles arising from the games, I'm also concerned about the mechanical noise from motorised mowers maintaining the playing fields.

6. Previous Planning applications

   Aspects of APP/X0360/W/19/3235572 of 25 August 2020 remain relevant, including the Inspector's recognition of the open, rural and tranquil character beyond Wokingham's urban edge.

7. Environmental impact

   There is insufficient assessment of the impact on the ecology and of potential flooding which occurs each year.

   The conversion from undeveloped grass field will have an adverse effect on animal and natural plant life that has existed for decades. There will also be loss of protected trees.

Overall, I believe the site to be unsuitable for the planned facilities, and the necessity for the development on countryside is not evidenced. Wokingham's green spaces would be under further threat if this application is granted.

I therefore respectfully request that the Council rejects this development.