

WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Comments on Application 172331 – Matthewsgreen Primary School and Community Facilities

On the whole we are pleased to note that the general design and layout appears to be of good quality and in keeping with the surrounding areas within the new development.

Nevertheless a number of areas of the proposed application give us cause for concern (see below) and are either inconsistent within the application and outline consents or seem to have been missed. If these concerns can be addressed then the Town Council will support the application.

Site Access

The Design and Access statement indicates that the main access to the site will be by 'Road 24' which is yet to be fully specified. Given the design of many of the roads already approved within the development and the purpose of this road which will be to provide pedestrian, small vehicle, delivery and refuse /emergency vehicle access to both the site and the adjoining residential areas we would like to seek assurances that this road will not be of the minimal 4.8 metre widths permitted elsewhere. This would be wholly inappropriate and clearly unable to deal with the peak time traffic associated with drop off and pick up from the school combined with community centre activities and the residents of the west side of Road 24. Caution is raised particularly about school pick up times where vehicles are not just stopping to drop off but will likely be waiting for a number of minutes for children to meet them. With the maximum available parking spaces for pick up being 26 on site for a school population of 420 (subject to community centre use as the same time) concern is raised that Road 24 will also be used for pick up leading to the same 'gridlocking' issues experienced currently at both Emmbrook Senior school and the Holt. The measures described in section 4.4.17 of the Transportation Technical Note to 'remind parents' will clearly be unworkable.

The Main School Pedestrian entrance on the south side of the site which has a wide capacity entrance opens directly onto the NDR. Concern is raised about the current lack of any firm proposals for safe crossing arrangements outside the school and the capacity of the pavements to safely cope with hundreds of children leaving the school on foot at the same time each afternoon directly onto a busy arterial road.

What provision will be made for the parking of delivery vehicles to the site? No provision seems to have been included anywhere.

Design and Access Statement

Section 4.2 of this document sets out the 'High Level Zoning principle' for the site.

These include 'Developing the areas in front of the school main entrance' as arrival spaces. This Main entrance is located on the NDR and no facilities to provide arrival spaces here are shown.

It also includes 'Parking split between school staff, community and school pick up'. This does not seem to have been catered for in any material way and would seem to provide freely accessible parking by anyone who is not familiar with the site arrangements or chooses not to follow the rules.

Section 5.5 of the document states that the two vehicle entrances on Road 24 will be of single width. Concern is expressed about site deliveries and refuse/emergency vehicles using single limited width entrances.

Section 5.9 is at least confusing. It shows the Primary Vehicle access route using pedestrian only entrances and the secondary pedestrian route using vehicle only entrances.

Transport Technical Note

Analysis of the plans contained in this document give major cause for concern.

Plan 'Refuse Vehicle Tracking' assumes nothing will be parked outside of any space allocations and also in the drop off bays in order for the refuse vehicle to manoeuvre on site. We are pleased to note that the vehicle will be able to manoeuvre around the community centre car park. However the refuse bins are shown in the layout plans on the southern part of site which does not seem to be accessible and at a minimum would require the refuse vehicle to negotiate the 'staff car park' as well.

Likewise the 'Fire Tender Tracking' plan shows a requirement to use the drop off bays in order to negotiate the site. As long as a fire occurs when no one is parked here then this can only be regarded as satisfactory.

Phase 1 External Arrangement Plan

This plan is also confused. It shows a vehicular entrance from the NDR directly into the Outdoor Play areas on the south east side of the site. It shows a pedestrian crossing on the border of the staff car park but gives no idea of the planned crossings outside on the Main School Entrance.

Pupil Capacities

We would question whether the capacity of 26 Nursery places is sufficient given the pressure such facilities are under currently under in the area and the fact that the new housing development is likely to attract families with children of nursery school age.

Environmental

A Soft External Play Area and a Hard Outdoor Play PE area are located to the South and South East of the site immediately adjacent to the NDR. In the planning, environmental consideration seems to have been given to noise but nothing seems to have been addressed about the air pollution aspects of locating child play facilities adjacent to what is likely to be a busy arterial road. We would urge some consideration as to the impact of this on young children breathing in traffic fumes while exercising. In particular the proposed crossing on the south of the site could exacerbate this as vehicle engines produce the most fumes when the vehicle is stationary.

School Access

The drop off areas located to the north east of the site are a distance from the Main School Entrance to the southern part of the site. It would appear that to get from the drop off area to the main entrance children will be required to cross other areas where vehicles will be manoeuvring giving cause for concern over safety issues on the site. The closest entrance to the facility to the drop off point appears to be the main entrance for the community facilities.

Travel Plans

In the travel plan documents much emphasis is made on the provision of local bus stops and use of buses as a preferred methods of transport to the schools site. It also notes that an operator has not yet been identified for these. Therefore we feel the dependence on the use of buses for travel to the site should not be taken into account in this approval until the provision of such services has been confirmed.

Even given the provision of bus services the problems caused by private vehicle use around the existing schools in Emmbrook for pupil transport are well known and need to be further mitigated in any new schools rather than repeat the problems of the past.

Finally in section 6.2.7 it seems to suggest staff should be used to 'police' the use of the limited drop off car parking and 'remind' users of its intended purpose. Surely a better solution can be found than using school staff as car park attendants.

Floorplans

Given the current major controversy about school WC facilities in certain education authorities being 'gender neutral' can it be confirmed what is being provided by this application? A number of the facilities marked on the floor plans do not appear to be segregated. Currently many parents seem to be very concerned about this issue and it needs to be clarified.

Planning & Transportation Committee

25th September 2017

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