

NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

28 October 2015

This is information that has been received since the committee report was written. This could include additional comments or representation, new information relating to the site, changes to plans etc.

Item 6a) 15/07861/FUL – Meadowpark School, The Old Schoolhouse, High Street, Cricklade, SN6 6DD

Neighbour Representations submitted to Committee Members

Dear Councillors

I am the neighbour living immediately adjacent to Meadowpark School and I will be speaking on Wednesday at the Planning Committee meeting. I will be requesting you to vote for refusal of this application and also asking the reasons for refusal are amended to include highways issues.

I was not surprised Meadowpark submitted a new application because I read this article in the Wilts and Gloucester Standard where the co-owner (Headmistress) criticised the decision http://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/11840290.Meadowpark_School_consider_appealing_rejected_extention_plans/ however I was surprised to see the new application was the same as the previous in terms of increase in pupil numbers, provision of parking and access and the siting of a new building in exactly the same location.

Having read the report written by Alex Smith in preparation for Wednesday's meeting I can see the Conservation issues have been extensively covered although I remain concerned about the impact on us of noise from increasing pupil numbers however I am very concerned about highways issues, the withdrawal of the two previous highways objections is inappropriate for the following reasons:

Refusal reason 1 - adequate provision for parking and setting down and pick up of pupils:

Parking:

* the school closes and padlocks its gates during school hours and visitors have to park on the street - this was seen by Alex Smith and put in his report last January

* the gravel area supposed to be used for parking is anyway only accessible by crossing the tarmac playground

As these factors mean the parking cannot be readily accessible throughout the day does this mean the Highways Officer is granting the school exemption from Wiltshire's Parking Standards?

Set down and pickup of pupils:

* the change of use planning application submitted in 2009 to return the property to use as a school stated due to "conflict" on the shared access drive (it is single width at its narrowest point - please see photograph below showing access drive with parked cars) parents would not use the rear of the school for pick up and drop off - instead designated set down areas in the street would be communicated to parents. However that has not happened and instead the school has been using the rear of the school for the school run (this is referred to by the Highways Officer as "the proposed priority system") and are now asking for this "system" to be approved for the increase in pupils. We have complained about this as it means with 37 cars coming and going twice a day (at the end of last year when they had 42 pupils) we have an additional 148 crossings every day of the gravel drive that runs immediately alongside our house wall and patio. (Please note that the access was historically a solely residential access and was sold to the Old School property in 1996 before it was put back into use as a school)

* whilst the school owns the gravel access our title deeds give us rights of way and we pay a proportion of maintenance costs - despite this we have not been consulted by either the school or the Highways Officer

We cannot sit and enjoy breakfast or tea in the afternoons on our patio because of the noise generated by the vehicles using the gravel driveway and we do not feel safe using either our vehicular access or two pedestrian accesses. I am frustrated to say my complaints have not been answered even the ones submitted via our MP, James Gray and I would really have liked the Committee Report to mention my concerns and make a comment on whether 148 vehicles and any increase can really be seen as acceptable in terms of noise and disturbance? And can it be right or fair that such a fundamental change to traffic management take place without consultation or any apparent planning process. This "system" is a breach of the original 2009 planning permission and surely if any system is to work the other people using the same road need to be included and considered?

Refusal reason 2 - Access and safety:

* the refusal specified a concern to public safety coming from "vehicles reversing into and out of the site or waiting in the public highway" - we have submitted photographs showing this to be the case (I attach two such photographs below), a neighbour has submitted a DVD showing footage of this happening and dozens of letters of objection have specified witnessing cars waiting in the highway - the Highways Officer has not consulted with anyone other than the school and does not mention any of this submitted evidence in his report? Also his site visit was also conducted during half term - I would have thought he would want to see the situation when the school is operating in order to fully understand the impact?

* as we can not turn cars around on our property we have to reverse onto the drive when accessing our property and our security means that our cars have to wait by the gates whilst we go through the house to either lock or unlock them - again no mention of this situation which would affect the operation of the "system" and how it would put further stress on us in our day to day living is considered in the Highways Officers Report.

Isn't the need for safe access to transport networks in Core policy 61 and how can this shared access provide this given all the evidence submitted during the public consultation, or is the school again being given exemption from this policy too?

It is true that traffic is a general issue however the school has contributed significantly to the problems and over one hundred letters of objection agree. When the school was first launched the expectation was that it would serve the local community instead the majority of pupils come from North Swindon so there are many more cars than originally forecast. And there has been much in the news lately about how councils are concerned about safety during school runs and putting in place exclusion zones so I cannot understand how the decisions of the Highways Officer seem to have been made without any reference to all the evidence submitted by us and the dozens of other local residents?

Please vote to refuse the application but also ask for an amendment to the grounds for refusal to include highways and access issues. Going forwards it will help to ensure that any further proposals for development are based upon consultation with neighbours and the community and any future proposals can therefore take account of the concerns of the community?

This photograph shows the width of the single access - how can this be suitable for the needs of a school run?



The entrance to the gravel access drive is to the right of this photograph. You can see that a car waits in the highway whilst two cars exit the drive and whilst an adult crosses the road. Just up from this is a curve in the high street that means cars coming round the bend have to break quickly if a car is sat in the highway. It is a 20mph zone but the last speed monitoring recorded an average speed of 31mph - so any cars waiting in the highway pose a serious danger as was highlighted previously by the Highways Officer.





Officer Response

The matters raised here reflect those raised in consultation representations submitted during the consultation exercise on this application and which are referenced in the report to Committee and responded to within the report.

The photographs contained herein are copied into the presentation to Committee.

Neighbour Representations submitted to Committee Members

Dear Councillors

I live on the other side of the road from Meadowpark School. I will be coming to the Committee meeting on Wednesday to speak against the application.

In the meantime I would like you to have the opportunity to see a recording showing a number of hazardous situations from just three days. Please click here for a link through to a youtube video. <https://youtu.be/CGTsWKHshXg>

I know that the application is being recommended for refusal on conservation grounds and I very much welcome this however I would also like the opportunity to raise highways concerns. I am hoping that at the meeting you might be able to help us in terms of finding a way forward in ensuring that the concerns of us and the many local residents who are unhappy with the way the school manages the school run is reflected in the planning

application process.

Officer Response

Officers have viewed and considered the video but do not consider that the information alters the assessment of the proposals or the recommendation. It is not reasonable or feasible to show a 25 minute video as part of the Council's Committee proceedings and the officer presentation to Committee in respect of the application