

From: Emily Johnson
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 5:09 PM
To: Wells, Lesley
Cc: [Redacted text]
Subject: APP/23/00996 - 56a East Street, Havant

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Dear Lesley,

Thank you for your recent emails regarding the above referenced application. I trust that you found the site visit last week to be helpful, along with our initial comments in my email of Tuesday 23 January.

You have asked the applicant to respond to a number of other specific queries, which we deal with in turn below along with addressing some comments of third parties.

Meeting with Residents

The applicant is perfectly happy to meet with local residents to discuss their proposals for the site and to answer any queries. Given where we are in the planning process, it would seem sensible (as suggested by Councillor Harris) if this happened after the decision on the application but well in advance of the school opening. A residents' group could be formed to act as the point of contact with the school. The applicant has many schools of the kind being proposed here throughout the country. They are a 'good neighbour' and maintain strong relationships with their local residents and communities. Indeed, there are many occasions where local residents are invited into their schools to see the work of their pupils.

Proposed Use

The proposed school is for pupils with neurodiverse needs. These include social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. Some pupils will have additional associated special education needs. The pupils will all have an education, health, and care plan. The aim of the provision is to provide pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools with a caring and positive learning environment, where they can become successful learners and confident, emotionally intelligent individuals, who can demonstrate responsible citizenship in both the school and within the community.

There will be some learners who have a secondary diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or anxiety disorders, conditions that often display diverse learning styles to those within a SEMH cohort. Teaching strategies will, therefore, be adapted to fully engage all pupils in their learning. Some of the pupils may also have a specific or moderate learning difficulty. Before joining the school, a number of the pupils may well have experienced a series of failed educational placements, with pupils having missed significant periods of education.

The site will provide a nurturing school environment for vulnerable young persons. There will be a large staff team that can provide high levels of support and specialist teaching across a broad range of subjects, thereby ensuring that the children get the very best education possible, working incredibly hard to offer a personalised curriculum for every child to achieve transformational results. Pupils will be taught in small groups of no more than six per class with a class teacher and two

teaching assistants, and will always be supervised including transition of lessons, breaktime and lunchtimes.

Potential Noise

We note comments made from both some local residents and the Council's EHO in respect of potential noise and can provide some further details in respect of the MUGA. The MUGA will only be used during the school day between the hours of 9am- 3pm at various times for PE lessons and break times, as would be the case with any school. It will not be in continual use throughout the school day. Furthermore, it will not be used in the evenings or at weekends, the times when nearby residents would expect less noise, or outside of term times. The site is located within a town centre, where there is already much traffic and other activity. Limited use of the MUGA during the times/days indicated will not give rise to any significant impacts and would be no different than for any other school, many of which are located close to residential properties. If the LPA considers it appropriate, a planning condition could be imposed on the planning permission restricting use of the MUGA to the times indicated on weekdays and in term time only.

Pupils will not be outside the building without staff support and supervision. The proposed site plan submitted with the application includes details of the pupils outdoor area which is enclosed with the rear 2.4m perimeter fence. Again, this area will be used only for limited parts of the school day in term time, and not during the evening or weekends.

The application site is located within a mixed area of residential and commercial uses. This is an entirely acceptable location for a school and is a situation that prevails across the country. As also set out within the Planning and Heritage Statement, the lawful use of the building, now being within Class E, is such that it could be used for a multitude of other purposes within the need for planning permission. This could include a creche, day nursery or day centre where the grounds could be used at all times of the day without any LPA control and the operational hours could be longer than the general school day and at weekends.

Security & Crime Matters

We note the comments received from both residents and Hampshire Constabulary in respect of crime and security matters. The application proposals include new fencing and gates to the site's perimeter. The new fencing will be 1.8m – 2.4m high, as shown on the proposed site plan. This new fencing will ensure that the site is secure for pupils during the day and also after hours when there are no students or staff on the site. In addition, all of the external doors will be secured with gates so that the grounds are secure. Both the fencing and gates conform with the comments received from the Hampshire Constabulary.

There is no requirement here for any additional security measures beyond those that you would find at any mainstream school. Some of the comments of third parties relating to the potential character traits of the children, and the potential security and crime issues that may result, are entirely unfair and without foundation. As noted above, these children require specialist education provision because mainstream schools do not meet their education needs. This is through no fault of their own and they are not any more pre-disposed to abscond, behave unacceptably, or create noise than children in mainstream settings. To suggest otherwise is based on an unfounded stereotypical view of the nature of children who require additional support with their education to ensure better life outcomes. They are vulnerable young persons who both need and deserve an education that meets their needs and should not be unfairly tarnished as likely to give rise to anti-social behaviour.

With regard to the management of the school, it would have to be registered with Ofsted who would have to be satisfied that acceptable management procedures would be in place. This is a matter for Ofsted, as the regulator of schools, and not for the planning system. Ofsted would also carry out regular inspections when the school is operational.

Transport Considerations

It is noted that the comments of the highway officer are still awaited. In the meantime, we highlight a couple of points as a response to some of the third party comments.

As set out in the Transport Statement, approximately 90% of pupils will travel by shared taxi/minibus and 10% by sustainable transport modes (walking or public transport). It is estimated that the taxis will have a minimum capacity of two students with approximately half of them having the capacity for three or four students. On this basis, the Transport Statement has assumed that each taxi has a capacity of 2.75 pupils, equating to 25 car trips at school drop off and pick up times. The arrival and departure times will be concentrated around the morning and late afternoon when students and staff are arriving and departing the site. The students typically have a staggered departure from 2:30pm to 4pm. Outside of term times and during the evenings and weekends, the site will not be used and, therefore, there will be no impacts (unlike those generated by lawful Class E uses of the building).

The Travel Plan has been prepared to encourage sustainable modes of transport, encouraging a reduced need to travel for staff/site visitors. Travel Plan compliance could be secured through a planning condition, with ongoing monitoring to reduce staff travel patterns. In any case, the application site is located in a highly sustainable location and has sufficient parking for the intended use.

We hope you find the above commentary both clear and helpful in your assessment of the application proposals.

The NPPF is clear that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities and that LPAs should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and (importantly here) to development that will widen choice in education. In this regard, LPAs must give 'great weight' to proposals to create new school places. Furthermore, the proposals involve the reuse of an existing building on a brownfield site and in a highly sustainable location. Policy provisions at all levels support the creation of new schools in such locations. If they are not acceptable here it is unclear where they would be.

In light of the above, we trust that you will be working towards supporting this much-needed facility. Noting your comment regarding the need for a committee decision, we would be grateful if you could confirm the committee date that you are working towards.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Emily

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