

To all members of Bray Parish Council,

I refer to 15/00801/FULL - Braywick Court School which I understand will be considered at your meeting to be held on the 1 June. This letter is written on behalf of all the residents of Hibbert Road and Gas Lane whose names and addresses are listed below. All are within Bray Parish.

I should say at the outset that we have no objection to the continued use of the former Winbury School buildings being used to accommodate an infant school for 90 pupils, together with a reasonable small extension to provide improved facilities.

However the present proposal which seeks to accommodate 210 pupils is a totally inappropriate form of development on a small site and is in conflict with a whole range of normal planning policies and standards that are elaborated below. Furthermore the proposed takeover of the existing Nature Centre building and adjoining open space, which in turn necessitates the construction of a replacement building elsewhere within the formal gardens in this corner of Braywick Park is a further retrograde step that increases the loss of existing public open space.

Assuming that a further primary school in this part of Maidenhead is required, and that the former Winbury buildings are to be utilised in that process, the more logical approach in planning terms would be to locate the additional buildings required for the remainder of the school on another site that would avoid most or all the planning problems associated with the present scheme. Regrettably the RBWM Cabinet, in its decision of March 2014 to commit to the present scheme, failed to consider any of the potential planning problems that would arise from pursuing the scheme now being proposed. Indeed it is evident from a reading of the report to the Cabinet that not only was there no meaningful planning input, but that there were misleading references to only "a smaller extension" being required to the Winbury buildings. As a consequence, the possibility of a split site alternative was never considered, and the Cabinet decision has to all intents and purposes given the green light to the present scheme that is totally inappropriate in the location proposed. There was no public consultation at the time so no opportunity until now for the residents and park users to air their concerns. It is understandable that local residents and park users alike are upset at the manner in which this flawed scheme has been effectively promoted and facilitated by the Borough Council.

The present proposal is considered to be completely unacceptable from a planning point of view and numerous letters of objection have been sent to the planning department of RBWM by local residents and Braywick Park users alike. The objections can be summarised as follows:

**1. The proposed development is an inappropriate development within the green belt and would adversely affect its openness.**

In the submitted Planning Statement the applicant claims that the development is not inappropriate. And in support of that claim cites Para 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework. That paragraph states:

*"The extension or alterations of a building **provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;***

- The replacement of a building, **provided that the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;***
- Limited infilling or the partial complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), **which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development"**.*

The proposed development however seeks to demolish a building of 71m<sup>2</sup> and replace it with one of 762m<sup>2</sup>. Thus the new building would be almost **10 times larger than the one it replaces** in terms of overall floorspace and the footprint would be 7 times bigger. The proposed new building would be over 3 metres higher to the ridge than the existing Nature Centre building which it would nearly adjoin and even the eaves would be higher than the ridge of the Nature Centre. It would thus be very prominent in the street scene and this is amply demonstrated by a glance at these two 'before' and 'after' photos that have been submitted (somewhat amazingly) in support of the application.



Existing view of site along Hibbert Road from The Causeway



Same viewpoint showing the proposed new building

How can the applicant claim that this does ***“not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt....., than the existing development”*** or that it is ***“not materially larger than the one it replaces;”***?

The viewpoint incidentally is not just a random view, it is adjacent to the row of Listed Buildings, the Hibbert Road Cottages and is taken from the Green Way, an RBWM promoted leisure walking route. Local Plan Policy R14 states the Council’s intent to resist proposals that adversely affect users’ enjoyment of the route.

If the development is inherently inappropriate in the Green Belt, then ‘*very special circumstances*’ must be successfully demonstrated if the development is to be approved.

The applicant sets out three so called ‘very special circumstances’ as follows:

- (1) The applicant states that there is an educational need for the school and cites the Council's 10 Year School Expansion Programme.
- (2) The applicant also states that there was a demand for places at Braywick Court School for 2015/2016.
- (3) And the applicant set out a number of alternative sites that had been considered but the preferred location was the Hibbert Road site. Seven of the possible 11 sites to provide school places in Maidenhead were located in Slough.

None of the above can be regarded as justification for locating the site within the Green Belt

## **2. The proposed development is likely to cause traffic problems such as increased traffic generation, access or safety problems.**

The Transport Assessment and the School Travel Plan (as well as the Planning Statement) both totally ignore the fact that Park and Stride (from the car park behind Stafferton Lodge PH) has not worked with fewer than 30 pupils and will certainly not work effectively with 210 pupils. The school introduced a Kiss and Drop scheme in

the Hibbert Road car park last autumn. Periodic observations of what is actually happening indicate for example that on occasions as many as 19 cars entered the Hibbert Road car park and parents/guardians either parked and took their child into the school or used the Kiss and Drop. Kiss and Drop can work with fewer than 30 pupils – and possibly up to 100 pupils, but not as pupil numbers increase gradually to 210.

This summer term, the school is trying to enforce the Park and Stride scheme with the introduction of a walking bus from the car park behind Stafferton Lodge PH to the school. How successful the Park and Stride scheme will be remains to be seen as how can the school enforce it?

Given the operation of Kiss and Drop, and the unrealistic Park and Stride scheme, the Transport Assessment should address the impact of increased traffic generation on Hibbert Road, the possibility of queuing out onto Hibbert Road, and concomitant road safety matters. It is considered that the intensification in the level of activity on the site and the substantial increase in traffic generation on Hibbert Road would have an unacceptable effect on the local road network and the environment of the area, giving serious concerns for road safety.

It is proposed that delivery/waste collection vehicles would drive through the public car park and along the path (which forms part of the Green Way) within the formal gardens to gain access to the school. Use of the Green Way in this manner would cause serious conflict between traffic and pedestrians in the formal gardens as well as in the public car park, and would cause noise and disturbance to users of the formal gardens. Already, a recycling vehicle backs down the Green Way to the school, causing damage to the trees en route.

There is no mention in the Transport Assessment of where the occasional bus/coach parking will take place. Currently, pupils travel by bus to swimming lessons on Thursdays, with the coach parking in the A308 slip road. Buses parking here block visibility of drivers turning left from Hibbert Road onto the A308, and can cause confusion for drivers on the A308 wanting to turn left into Hibbert Road.

The Transport Assessment also fails to mention the construction impacts. Where will the construction compound be located? It will have to be within the Hibbert Road car park as the Design and Access Statement refers to materials being delivered to the car park and then off loaded onto smaller vehicles and moved to the school site. The tipper lorries for removal of spoil etc. and concrete mixers will also have to use the route of the Green Way to gain access to the site. What is the anticipated length of the construction period?

### **3. The proposed development provides insufficient parking/reduces the amount of car parking available.**

The application site includes an area of car parking for 8 cars which is not adequate for 8 teachers and 16 part time staff stated on the application form (though the Planning Statement says: 8 teachers and 11 administrative staff). It is not known what the full time equivalent is as that information has not been provided.

The latest school newsletter (2 April 2015) shows the staff structure for 2015/2016 which includes 13 full and part time staff for a maximum of 60 pupils. What will be the actual number of full and part time staff for 210 pupils?

The leasing of 8 car parking spaces in the existing car park to the school reduces the number of spaces available for the general public. The use of the Hibbert Road car park for Kiss and Drop would, as pupil numbers increase, have an increasingly adverse impact on casual users of the car park, formal gardens, and Braywick Park.

There are legitimate concerns that the Hibbert Road car park would eventually be taken over by the school, were the development permitted. This would represent a significant loss for members of the public who currently use and enjoy Braywick Park.

### **4. The layout and density of the proposed development is inappropriate.**

The footprint of the proposed development is over 7 times bigger than that of the existing building and the total floorspace within the new building is 10 times bigger than the one it replaces.

Clearly the proposed new building is not compatible with the scale of existing buildings on the site (the school building or the Nature Centre) or in the vicinity of the application site. As the proposed new development is far closer to the street, it would be overpowering in terms of mass and height. The development would be



extremely cramped and represents over-development of the site which again is out of character on Hibbert Road.

**5. The proposed development will have negative impact on the amenity of another property, through noise, overlooking, overshadowing, loss of privacy, etc.**

There would be issues of noise, overlooking and loss of privacy, particularly with respect to the Well House and Malvern House.

**6. The proposed development would impact the setting of listed buildings.**

The terrace of five cottages in Hibbert Road opposite the school building are Grade 2 Listed Buildings.

There is no site section showing the impact of the new development on the listed cottages. The closest representation is the Modelled View from Viewpoint 5 (The Causeway immediately adjacent to Rose Cottage).

The application does not address the adverse impact the proposed school development would have on the non-designated heritage assets - the Braywick Nature Centre which was the former stables for Braywick Lodge and the former Winbury School buildings which date back to Victorian and possibly earlier times.

**7. The proposed development includes insufficient landscaping and will result in significant loss of trees.**

The school development involves the loss of the three yew trees plus two field maples and the two apple trees in the orchard area. The significance of the yew trees can be clearly seen in the Modelled Views from Viewpoint 4 below in which the trees to be removed are shaded.

With respect to the replacement Nature Centre, this would require the removal of at least ten trees, possibly more as the Development Tree Survey refers to the 'part removal of 4 metre wide swath' in which there are located yew, cherry, larch and hornbeams.

It is considered that the amenity value of the trees to be removed, especially the three yew trees in the Nature Centre garden, outweighs the justification for development.



**8. The proposed development would result in the loss of open space in Braywick Park which is important to the visual and environmental quality of the area and there would be damage the natural environment**

There will be a loss of open space around the Nature Centre which is to be taken over by the school and a loss of open space where the replacement Nature Centre is proposed to be located. There would be a significant adverse impact on the visual and environmental quality of the formal gardens by the removal of many trees, the massing, height and design of the new school development together with the 1.8 metres high weld mesh fence along the northern boundary, as well as by the proposed log cabin structure for the replacement Nature Centre.

It is considered that given the lack of play space within the application for the school, there are legitimate concerns that there will be pressure on the formal gardens for play space which would have an adverse impact on the environmental quality of these gardens which are well used by members of the public.

The application site is adjacent to the Dell which forms part of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a statutory designation; the Dell is also a Local Wildlife Site.

There is no information on where the pupils would play other than in the insufficient spaces outside the classrooms, the 'playground' at the eastern end of the school site, and the adventure trail area to be created at the western end of the site. The applicant does acknowledge however *“that there is likely to be a minor increase in recreational pressure at the site, as the capacity of the school will be increased.”* It is considered that there are legitimate concerns that there would be more than a 'minor increase' in recreational pressure on the Dell which would be likely to have an adverse impact on the LNR through noise and disturbance.

#### **9. The proposed development would have an adverse impact on the Green Way recreational route**

The proposed development would prejudice the route as well as detract from users' enjoyment of the Green Way in a number of ways, including:

- \* increased pedestrian/vehicular conflict due to an increase in vehicular movements (cars and delivery/waste collection lorries) within the Hibbert Road car park through which the Green Way passes. .
- \* increased pedestrian/vehicular conflict due to an increase in vehicular movements (delivery/waste collection vehicles) along the Green Way itself where it runs along the northern boundary of the school site to the entrance to the school.
- \* increased traffic generation on Hibbert Road which the Green Way crosses and alongside which the Green Way is routed from the Hibbert Road car park to The Causeway;

Whereas the Council has a declared policy of seeking landscape enhancement to areas adjoining the Green Way, this proposal involves the removal of the yew and field maple trees which are in the garden area to the north of the Nature Centre and the addition of 1.8 metre weld mesh gates and fencing along the northern boundary. The removal of the trees together with the introduction of the fencing would result in a degradation of the landscape along the Green Way.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment does not give any consideration to the impact of the development on the Green Way, only Green Lane which is located to the east of the school site.

#### **10. The proposed development involves the loss of the existing Nature Centre building for use by the general public**

This existing attractive character building which dates back to the 19th century, together with its surrounding open curtilage, is well used by the general public, including schools and other user groups. Its loss for this purpose would be particularly regrettable and it is considered that the proposed log cabin replacement would not be an acceptable alternative provision.

Assuming that there is a proven need for an additional primary school in this part of Maidenhead, there is particular concern that no effort has been made to explore more realistic alternatives which would avoid almost all the problems associated with the existing proposed gross overdevelopment of a site in the formal gardens of Braywick Park. Why, for example, didn't the applicant consider the use of the Oldfield Road school site which will be vacated by Forest Bridge School in September 2017? **Why hasn't the applicant considered the possibility of a split site (infant school on the Winbury School site and the middle school located elsewhere, possibly Braywick Meadows behind Stafferton Lodge) which has been advocated by a number of local residents?** This question has been put to both the applicant and the Council but neither one has given any explanation as to why this obvious alternative approach appears to have been ignored.

**It would be very helpful if the Parish Council could assist in getting these possible alternatives looked into.**

We hope that the Parish Council will both support the efforts of local residents to have this present unsatisfactory scheme rejected and request the Borough Council to investigate a more appropriate method of developing the school.

Yours Sincerely,