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My ref:
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Date: 17 September 2020

Dear Ms St John Howe

**Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Examination – Supplementary Education Statement
in respect of Brookmans Park (Site HS22 (BrP4) Land West of Brookmans Park
Railway Station**

At the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) Examination in Public session regarding Brookmans Park (on 18 August 2020), a number of queries were raised regarding education provision. The Inspector has therefore requested specific additional information from the Education Authority regarding Brookmans Park Primary School. The responses to the Inspectors enquiries are set out below.

Current and Forecast Capacity:

At the local plan stage Hertfordshire County Council currently calculates primary pupil yield based on a ratio of 1 Form of Entry (FE) of need arising from 500 dwellings. Therefore, the dwellings proposed for Brookmans Park would equate to 0.55FE of primary education need, which is approximately 17 children per year group.

Hertfordshire County Council forecasts primary education demand by Primary Planning Area. Brookmans Park Primary School is within the Ridgeway West Primary Planning Area (PPA).

The County Council forecasts demand for school places four years into the future. These forecasts are informed by the numbers of pre-school aged children registered with GPs as living in the area and take account of historic migration patterns as well as assumed pupil demand from new housing expected to yield within the next 4 years.

Table 1 below sets out the latest forecast in relation to the Ridgeway West PPA (published summer 2020). This also sets out the number of reception places available at the schools in the PPA (for the Ridgeway West PPA the only primary school in the area is Brookmans Park Primary School).

Table 1: Current Primary School Forecasts for the Ridgeway West PPA (published summer 2020):

15.3 Ridgeway West		Places Available 2020-21	Actuals			Forecast			
School Code	School Name		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
5210	Brookmans Park Primary School	45	45	45	46				
	Total Year R Pupil Demand		45	45	46	47	42	36	37
	Total Year R Places Available	45				45	45	45	45
	Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (No.)					-2	3	9	8
	Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (%)					-4.4%	6.7%	20.0%	17.8%
	Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (FE)					-0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3

This clearly shows that Brookmans Park Primary School is currently at capacity with a limited surplus of reception places in the school for the next four years.

Feasibility work, undertaken by the County Council, on the Brookmans Park Primary School site shows that a 0.5FE expansion could be accommodated within the current site. This is the maximum size of expansion that can be accommodated within the current primary school site. Therefore, a 0.5FE expansion at Brookmans Park Primary School would be sufficient to mitigate the level of development currently allocated in the WHBC draft Local Plan and pupil yield calculated to arise.

In terms of whether the existing 1.5FE of education provision at Brookmans Park Primary School currently caters for residents of Brookmans Park or whether there is a proportion of children at Brookmans Park Primary School coming from elsewhere – Around 80% of the pupils who live closest to Brookmans Park Primary School attend the school, with the remaining circa 20% of pupils attending other primary schools; which is as a result of parental preference. The inflow of around 20% of pupils is predominately from Hatfield and Potters Bar; this equates to around 60 pupils across the whole primary school.

Whilst there is currently an inflow into the school from further afield as a result of parental preference from pupils who live closer to other schools, this is not considered to be significant. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable for there to be a level of flexibility within the overall number of school places to allow for fluctuations in local demand and parental preference, and indeed, analysis of the latest GP registration data of the current number of 0 to 4 year olds living in Brookman’s Park indicates future demand from the existing community for reception places does fluctuate year on year.

Taking into account the numbers of pre-school aged children currently living within the existing community, the fluidity in the population and the anticipated yield from the scale of new housing in the local area, it is considered that the 0.5fe expansion of Brookman’s Park Primary School provides the right level of primary capacity to meet future demand.

When forecasting pupil demand, the population does not remain static. If in future years demand for places exceeds the increased capacity of the school, the school’s oversubscription criteria will apply and, apart from siblings any child looked after or any child applying with specific social/medical needs, those living in the school’s catchment area and nearest the school will be prioritised over those living further afield.

If that is the case and the pupils currently flowing into Brookman's Park are pushed back, consideration will need to be given to ensuring sufficient places in those areas to accommodate the additional demand this would result in.

In addition to considering the impact of schools within a PPA the County Council has considered the mitigation of children across the plan area as a whole. If the pupils currently flowing into Brookmans Park are pushed back, either through a greater local need or through a greater level of dwellings being allocated at Brookmans Park than currently proposed, then this is likely to have implications on the primary provision in these other areas.

Conclusion:

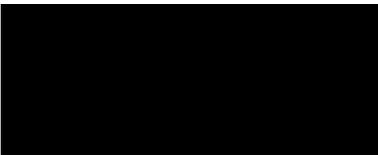
To conclude, Hertfordshire County Council, as Education Authority, has a statutory duty to provide places for all children in the county. It is the County Council's view that, based on the latest available data and as set out above, there is only a very limited surplus of reception places within the current capacity of Brookmans Park Primary school for the next four years.

It is proposed that the yield from future dwellings proposed for Brookman's Park within the Local Plan could be mitigated through the expansion of Brookman's Park Primary School by 0.5fe to 2fe.

It is anticipated that the level of dwellings currently proposed in the Local Plan would broadly fill the 0.5FE expansion.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any clarification in relation to this response.

Yours sincerely



Antony Proietti

Growth Area Team Leader (North East Growth Area), Growth & Infrastructure Unit