



**Hearing Statement- Stage 9  
Consideration re Document EX206A  
(HCC Letter re Little Heath Education)**

On behalf of:

**King & Co**

Representor ID:

**863963**

In respect of:

**Welwyn and Hatfield Local Plan  
Examination in Public Stage 9**

Date:

**February 2021**

Reference:

**MA/KING & CO/003-04/R010M**

## APPENDICES

EX206A          HCC Education Note

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted by ATP in respect of document EX206A as it pertains to the availability of primary school places to serve draft allocation sites HS24 and HS25 in the submitted Plan.
- 1.2 We understand that this document was prepared by HCC following the Stage 8 Hearings (in response to the Inspector's request for clarification following assertions by Little Heath Action Group to challenge the HCC conclusion that the resultant demand for school places could be met by latent supply.
- 1.3 The Inspector is inviting representations and we envisage that these will inform an Inspector-led dialogue in relation to this topic as part of the Examination at Stage 9. At this point, neither the Council's response nor that of any other representors to EX206A have been published. We reserve the right to add to these comments as and when those responses are made available.
- 1.4 We confirm for completeness that we are broadly agreed with the conclusions of HCC that clarify that there is adequate residual capacity to meet the projected need for primary school places.

## 2.0 Responses to Statement

2.1 HCC have provided a supplementary statement (**EX2o6A**) that responds to two central challenges which comprise:

- Does the evidence show that there is sufficient residual capacity in terms of school places for the Primary Planning Area to accommodate proposed housing development?
- Is it likely that the residents of Little Heath would be able to secure places at the local primary school?

*Does the evidence show that there is sufficient residual capacity in terms of school places for the Primary Planning Area to accommodate proposed housing development?*

2.2 HCC's evidence to Stage 8 of the Local Plan Examination clarified their consistent position which has been that there is adequate capacity to accommodate planned housing growth in the Little Heath area (through yields associated with draft allocation sites HS24 and HS25).

2.3 Our previous representations to the Examination (both at Stage 8 and through response to Council consultations) confirmed our understanding of the current supply/demand position and the modelled requirements of the HS25 scheme. In this context it is worth noting that the yield for site HS25 will typically lead to a requirement for two school places per year group and by virtue of latent capacity there would appear to be no impediment to meeting the demand for school places or any requirement for facilities to be extended.

2.4 HCC's new report (EX2o6A) updates the supply/demand projections which demonstrates that (for the Primary Planning Area) that the level of latent capacity is 40 places per year group in 2020/21 which increases steadily to 54 places per year group in 2023/24.

2.5 Given the progress on the Local Plan and building in a realistic programme for the DM planning process and construction, it is unlikely that houses would be capable of occupation prior to the 2022/23 academic year. In the context of cumulative yield involving the HS24 site, it would seem realistic that the majority of the resultant yield could be delivered by 2023/24. The level of residual capacity at 2023/24 is projected by HCC at 54 places per year group.

2.6 HCC then project forward the anticipated demand for school places consequent from 135 new homes, which would equate to 8 school places per year group. Given that HCC advise that there would be residual capacity of 54 places per year group in 2023/24 for the Primary Planning Area (PPA), it is unsurprising that they confirm that the anticipated requirement for 8 additional school places within the PPA can be met.

2.7 We raise no adverse comments in this respect and support this conclusion.

*Is it likely that the residents of Little Heath would be able to secure places at the local primary school?*

2.8 Our previous representations advised our interpretation of the evidence which is that there would be considerable latent capacity in the Primary Planning Area as a whole, but also highlighted our understanding that the composition of pupils did include “inflow” from households where Little Heath Primary School would not be their closest school.

2.9 By consequence of this and application of standard selection criteria it would support the notion that any additional children could secure school places at the closest available school whilst leaving adequate latent capacity in the PPA as a whole to meet these demands.

2.10 These conclusions aligned with the evidence provided by HCC through the Stage 8 Hearings, and it was principally this that was challenged by Little Heath Action Group.

2.11 HCC’s new report provides very helpful analysis in these respects. It clarifies that:

- 84% of the attendees of Little Heath Primary School live in the PPA, with others flowing in from the adjoining PPA (Ridgeway West and Hatfield).
- 62% of primary age pupils living closest to Little Heath Primary School actually attend that school. Most of the residual Little Heath children attend other schools in the PPA.

2.12 The letter advises (by way of an example) that for the 20/21 school year, 24 reception age pupils would deem Little Heath as their nearest school and 20 of those have accepted school places there. The remaining four all expressed a 1<sup>st</sup> preference for other schools and have been allocated accordingly (this includes consideration of faith-based provision).

2.13 It is straightforward to infer from the above that in the context of the 20/21 year (where the R demand for school places for the PPA is at its highest) that 10 residual school places would be available as first priority for children who would class Little Heath as their nearest school.

2.14 In the context of the evidence (that 62% of those pupils actually take those places) then an overall growth in requirement of 8 places per year group should not cause concern given the latent supply of 10 school places.

2.15 HCC confirm that families in Little Heath would have a priority for securing a place at their local school and more generally restate their conclusion that the anticipated requirement for 8 additional school places within the PPA can be met.

2.16 We raise no adverse comments in this respect and support this conclusion.