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Date: 23 April 2021

Dear Ms St John Howe

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan Examination – Supplementary Education Statement in respect of primary education provision within Cuffley

At the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) Examination in Public session regarding Cuffley (Stage 9 Hearing Sessions on 18 March 2021) a number of questions were raised regarding primary education provision in Cuffley. The Inspector has therefore requested specific additional information from the Education Authority clarifying the position of primary education provision in Cuffley. The responses to the Inspectors enquiries are set out below.

Current and Forecast Capacity at Cuffley:

Cuffley is currently served by Cuffley Primary School. This is a 2 Form of Entry (FE) primary school located within the settlement.

Hertfordshire County Council forecasts demand for primary school places by Primary Planning Area (PPA) four years into the future. It is not possible to accurately forecast primary yield after four years as the children are not yet born. 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 an element of new housing expected to be built, occupied and yielding new pupils by 2023/24.

Cuffley Primary School is within the Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA. Also, in the Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA are:

- Goffs Oak Primary and Nursery School
- Woodside Primary School
- Northaw Church of England Primary School

Table 1 below sets out the latest current capacity and forecasts in relation to the Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA.

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

10.6 Goffs Oak Ridgeway South										
School Code	School Name	Places Available 2020-21	Actuals				Forecast			
			2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
2263	Goffs Oak Primary & Nursery School	30	31	31	31	30				
2401	Woodside Primary School	30	30	28	26	27				
5205	Cuffley School	60	60	60	56	57				
5209	Northaw Church of England Primary School	15	16	15	15	11				
Total Year R Pupil Demand			137	134	128	125	143	137	150	128
Total Year R Places Available		135					135	135	135	135
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (No.)							-8	-2	-15	7
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (%)							-5.9%	-1.5%	-11.1%	5.2%
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (FE)							-0.3	-0.1	-0.5	0.2

The primary schools in Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA offer 135 Reception places in total. For the past three academic years there has been a very close match between supply and demand across the PPA, with Cuffley School having very little (negligible) surplus capacity in Reception.

Furthermore, the forecasts in Table 1 show that across the wider PPA there is either no spare capacity or very limited spare capacity forecast over the next four years (up to 2023-24).

Therefore, given the lack of existing capacity, both now and forecast for the future, further primary education capacity is required in order to mitigate the level of growth proposed for Cuffley in the submitted WHBC Local Plan.

Options for primary education mitigation in Cuffley:

At the local plan stage Hertfordshire County Council currently calculates primary pupil yield based on a ratio of 1FE of need arising from 500 dwellings. Therefore the 299 dwellings proposed for Cuffley in the submitted WHBC Local Plan would equate to approximately 0.6FE of primary demand.

To meet the anticipated yield from the proposed new housing growth in Cuffley and the neighbouring Goffs Oak, the County Council has identified the option to enlarge Woodside Primary School by 1FE. Whilst located in Goffs Oak, Woodside Primary School is within the Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA and neighbours Cuffley. The expansion of Woodside Primary School is set out in **Policy INF11: New and Expanded**

Primary Schools in the recently adopted Borough of Broxbourne Local Plan (adopted June 2020), see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Policy INF11: New and Expanded Primary Schools – The Borough of Broxbourne Local Plan (adopted June 2020)

Policy INF11: New and Expanded Primary Schools

I. Provision is made for new primary schools as follows: Brookfield Garden Village; Cheshunt Lakeside; Rosedale Park; High Leigh Garden Village and Albury Ride.

II. Woodside Primary School will be expanded to the east to provide additional capacity in Goffs Oak. In other locations additional primary school capacity may be provided at existing schools where there is identified expansion potential.

There is currently a relationship between Goffs Oak and Cuffley with, on average, 50% of pupils attending Cuffley Primary School residing in areas such as Goffs Oak, Flamstead End and Cheshunt. Approximately 50% (1FE) of the pupils attending Cuffley Primary School are those who live closest to it.

Cuffley Primary School is a Foundation School; it is its own admitting authority and therefore sets its own admissions criteria. After children looked after and children with medical and social need, it prioritises applications based on sibling links, children of staff, children who live in the Northaw and Cuffley parish and then on distance.

Therefore, the families from the new developments proposed in Cuffley will have a higher priority for a place at Cuffley Primary School, based on admissions criteria, than those children living further away. Some of those children applying from the Goffs Oak and wider Broxbourne area would be “pushed back” into the new capacity being provided by the new 1FE expansion at Woodside Primary School.

The proposed level of additional housing in Cuffley will therefore increase local demand and this, along with the additional school capacity planned through the expansion of Woodside Primary School will change the migration pattern across the area. Overall, the County Council considers that the additional 1FE of capacity proposed at Woodside Primary School is sufficient to cater for the demand across the area anticipated to arise from the 299 dwellings proposed in Cuffley and the housing growth identified in neighbouring Goffs Oak through the Borough of Broxbourne’s Local Plan.

In addition, the County Council has considered whether a greater number of dwellings, beyond the 299 dwellings within the submitted WHBC Local Plan, could be accommodated.

The County Council can confirm that of those schools within the Goffs Oak Ridgeway South PPA only the Woodside Primary School is able to expand. Cuffley Primary School, Goffs Oak Primary and Nursery School, and Northaw Church of England Primary School all cannot expand on their existing sites due to site, town planning and highways constraints. The 1FE expansion of the Woodside Primary School, to take its capacity to 2FE, is the maximum potential expansion capacity of that school.

The County Council has a preference for new primary schools to be at least 2FE. Primary schools of at least 2FE provide greater opportunity to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, offer wider opportunities for staff development and minimise the risk of financial pressures. The County Council would therefore look to establish new primary schools with the capacity for at least 2FE.

Given the lack of any other alternative options to increase primary education capacity in the local area, including the physical constraints of expanding the Cuffley Primary School site, the only possible option to mitigate a level of development in excess of that in the submitted WHBC Local Plan would be to relocate the existing 2FE Cuffley Primary School to a larger site and expand it by 1FE to become a 3FE primary school.

However, a relocated and expanded 3FE primary school would require approximately 800 dwellings in total in Cuffley in order to provide a critical mass of demand to support a 1FE expansion (800 dwellings comprising of the 299 dwellings in the submitted WHBC Local Plan, which can be accommodated within the current 2FE of provision through the push-back of pupils, and a further 500 dwellings which could be accommodated within a further 1FE expansion).

Furthermore, and importantly, Cuffley Primary School is a Foundation School, outside Local Authority control. Any proposal to relocate and expand it would need the full support of the School's Governing Body and additional capacity would need to be fully funded by developer contributions. There is currently no level of certainty that this option could be achieved.

In addition to this, no site for a new 3FE primary school in Cuffley has been identified. Any new primary school site would need to be accessible to the local community, would need to meet the County Council's school site land specification in order that the identified land was sufficient in size and topography for education provision, and was unfettered by constraints such as access and highway implications.

The County Council would also require that the need for a new primary school site is set out within a specific development site and policy within the Local Plan and that the broad location of it is not left to be determined until after the Local Plan has been adopted.

Conclusion:

To conclude, Hertfordshire County Council, as Education Authority, has a statutory duty to provide school 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, the level of growth proposed for Cuffley within the submitted WHBC Local Plan can be accommodated through a combination of new primary education provision in the wider PPA (e.g. the 1FE expansion to Woodside Primary School) and pushback of those pupils who are living further away Cuffley Primary School, freeing up capacity for the proposed new growth in the settlement.

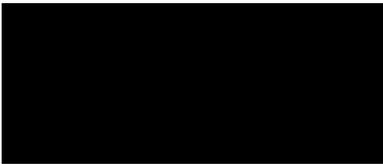
Pupil yield from additional growth in Cuffley, beyond that within the submitted WHBC Local Plan, is unlikely to be able to be met within the current and proposed expanded capacity of the existing schools. Greater demand, from higher levels of housing, could

only be accommodated through the relocation of the existing 2FE primary school in Cuffley to a larger site and expanding it by 1FE. To ensure there was a sufficient critical mass of demand to support the viability of a 3FE primary school, there would need to be a total of approximately 800 new dwellings coming forward in Cuffley.

However, as outlined above, the County Council at this time has no certainty that the option to relocate and expand Cuffley Primary School is either deliverable or acceptable to the Governing Body of the School.

The County Council trusts that this information is of assistance. However, please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any clarification in relation to the information in this Statement.

Yours sincerely



Antony Proietti

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