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Land North of Stevenage – Education Supporting Document

Summary

This Note is presented as a Supporting Document to accompany the Outline Planning Application for up to 800 dwellings at Land North of Stevenage. This number of new residential dwellings gives rise to a need for a new primary school in the absence of available spare places at existing schools in the near vicinity. Accordingly, provision is made for a 2FE school. The application provides for 1.56ha of serviced land to enable the delivery of a primary school providing school places directly related to the development at a scale that is fairly and reasonably related to the scheme. The proposed development generates a peak pupil demand requiring provision for up to 1.5 FE of school places but it is acknowledged the Local Education Authority may wish to provide a full 2FE school as a more efficient way to address demand created beyond the North of Stevenage allocation. Therefore, additional land (0.44ha) required to increase the school site to 2FE is safeguarded within the scheme should HCC wish to deliver as a larger school .

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development will, inevitably, introduce new children to the area. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is the Local Education Authority (LEA) which will have the statutory responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient state school places for the children who become residents of the new development and whose parents chose state education.
- 1.2 Children of secondary age will be found places at existing Stevenage secondary schools and this has been confirmed as appropriate through pre-application discussions with the LEA. However, HCC pupil forecasts for the primary schools close to the proposed development indicate that there will be few, if any, available places in the near future and that a new school will therefore be required. Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC) allocation for the site within the emerging Local Plan (Policy HO3) specifies the requirement for a primary school to be provided on site.

- 1.3 This proposed development cannot be viewed in isolation as far as education for primary age children is concerned. Another large development for 900 dwellings is proposed to the north of this North Stevenage site through the emerging North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) Local Plan and a further 149 dwellings are proposed for the adjacent former Rugby Club site within the SBC emerging Local Plan.
- 1.4 HCC's response to Stevenage Borough Council's draft Local Plan was that, to serve these new developments, two new 2FE schools will be required with one on the application site.
- 1.5 Having regard to pupil yield associated with the development, it is considered that this level of new school places would appear to be an over-provision and that 2 x 1.5FE schools or a 1 x 3FE school would be an adequate level of provision to meet the demand generated by the anticipated developments. As such, the application provides land for a 2FE; however only land for a 1.5FE entry school is required to meet the demand for primary school places directly generated by the planning application proposals, with an additional 0.5FE land safeguarded for future expansion should HCC require the additional space to meet demand from other developments.

2. Size of New Primary School(s)

- 2.1 Different sizes of schools have different site area requirements. The Department for Education document 'Building Bulletin 103' gives the latest recommendations regarding site area. At Annex B on page 44, it states that the recommended maximum site area for primary schools (5-11 years) is $2400 + 42N$ in square metres where N = number of pupils. For 1FE (210 pupils) this becomes 1.12 hectares. For 1.5FE it is 1.56ha and for 2FE it is 2ha.
- 2.2 Primary schools have 7 year groups (Years R [Reception] to Year 6). New primary schools are generally planned in whole forms of entry (FE) where a Form of Entry is a Class of (up to) 30 pupils such that a 1FE school will have 7 classes each with (up to) 30 pupils giving it a capacity for 210 pupils.
- 2.3 Hertfordshire County Council's stated preference is for 2FE schools where the capacity is for 420 pupils. Unfortunately, new pupils do not emerge neatly in groups of 30 (or 60) per age group and nor does a development generate a demand for a full form of entry. As such on occasions, schools are developed as smaller at 1FE or 1.5 FE or larger at 2.5FE or 3 FE.

- 2.4 New housing developments traditionally generate a higher number of younger (primary age) children in the early years of their development than in the years when they reach a level of maturity. **The target size of a new school should be aimed at this levelling out of pupil numbers and not at the early years following completion of a new development.**

3. Pupil Yield calculations

- 3.1 In order to determine the required size of the new primary school it is necessary to employ pupil yield calculations.
- 3.2 Pupil yield calculations used by most LEAs in the southern part of England for new housing developments are in the range 25-30 primary aged pupils per 100 new dwellings of 2/2+ beds.
- 3.3 This range is borne out by the pupil yields currently in use by HCC's neighbouring Authorities :
- | | | |
|--------------|---|-------|
| Suffolk | - | 25 |
| Essex | - | 30 |
| Cambs. | - | 25-35 |
| Norfolk | - | 26.1 |
| Central Beds | - | 28 |
- 3.4 HCC, however, currently bases pupil yield on a requirement for a 1FE primary school per 500 dwellings. This equates to 42 pupils per 100 dwellings. This figure is considerably out of line with its neighbouring Authorities and yet these Authorities are, nevertheless, managing to meet their statutory responsibilities.

4 Pupil Yield for North Stevenage site

- 4.1 **It is anticipated that the proposals could deliver approximately 228 x 1 & 2 bed flats.** Whilst the number of 1 x bed flats within this total is not finally fixed, the current best estimate is that there are likely to be **45 x 1 bed flats.** For calculations of pupil yield, these are non-counting units because it is highly unlikely that children will be residents in this type of accommodation. For this purpose, **therefore, the total of 755 counting units will be used for the North Stevenage site.**

- 4.2 HCC has said that the North Stevenage site, together with the 149¹ dwellings from the Rugby Club site, will need to be served by a 2FE (420 pupils) new primary school.
- 4.3 If the two sites together are considered as a 904 (755 + 149) new home development and if a reasonable yield figure of, say, 30 per 100, (to address the medium to longer term stable need) were to be used in the calculation, then only 271 pupils would be likely to be generated from the combined sites. This is less than a 1.5FE school (315 places).
- 4.4 If HCC were to build a 2FE new school and, if in the medium to longer need only 271 pupils were generated, then over a quarter of the school would be empty. Clearly, this would incur unnecessary capital expenditure and there would be wastage in on-going maintenance costs.
- 4.5 A summary of the foregoing is presented in a Table below:

Pupil Yield	North Stevenage dev't alone (755 dwellings)	N. Stevenage + Rugby Club (904 dwellings)
HCC yield (42 per 100)	317 pupils	380 pupils
Reasonable yield (30 per 100)	227 pupils	271 pupils

- 4.6 From the Table above it can be concluded that, even using the high HCC pupil yield ratio, a 1.5FE school (315 places) will adequately serve the needs of the proposed development site.
1.56 ha of land is, therefore, provided as part of the proposal as site area for this size of school.
- 4.7 This new primary school will also be expected to meet the needs of the former Rugby Club site if that proposed development proceeds. The dwellings (proposed 149 units) may well dictate the need for a 2FE school. Accordingly, a further 0.44ha of land is to be safeguarded adjacent to the 1.56ha and this will be available for acquisition at open market residential values should the need arise.

5. North Herts site

- 5.1 There is a further consideration in that there is an additional emerging proposal on land to the north in North Herts for a further 900 dwellings. This

¹ A breakdown of the likely accommodation schedule is not available so it is assumed that all 149 dwellings will be 'counting' units.

North Herts site and the North Stevenage site have a common boundary for part of their east/west axis. It is understood that HCC would require a 2FE new primary school for this site as well.

5.2 Referring to the calculations above, a 1.5FE new school is therefore adequate for this site also. The proposed primary school within the application site has been located adjacent to the boundary with the NHDC site in order to allow for expansion to a 3FE school should that site come forward. This is considered to be an entirely appropriate approach to ensuring integrated delivery of primary school education.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Whilst pupil yield predictions are not an exact science, it would appear that HCC is currently using pupil yields far in excess of other LEAs.

6.2 These high pupil yields have led to requests for site areas for 2 x 2FE primary schools when, on the face of it, 2 x 1.5FE schools would suffice.

6.3 If the proposed primary school site could be extended (and it has been located to support such an opportunity) to serve both the developments (North Stevenage and North Herts) then, the new school could be planned to develop to a 3 FE primary school. This is an acceptable size of primary school and would ensure no over-provision. From para.2.1 above, the site area requirement for a 3FE primary school is 2.9ha.

6.4 In summary, the application proposals provide land for a 1.5FE school and a financial contribution to the building costs of the school which is based on the pupil yield from the development. In calculating this contribution figure, HCC's pupil yield assumptions have been used which generates pupil yield from 800 unit scheme. Land for additional 0.5FE will be safeguarded and provisions will be made for the Council to purchase this additional land associated with need beyond that generated by the development at open market value. Contributions towards building the additional 0.5FE would be then be sought from other developments coming forward. The application makes provision for 1.56ha of serviced land to enable the delivery of a primary school providing school places directly related to the development at a scale that is fairly and reasonably related to the scheme. The proposed development generates a peak pupil demand requiring provision for up to 1.5 FE of school places but it is acknowledged the Local Education Authority may wish to provide a full 2FE school as a more efficient way to address demand created beyond the North of Stevenage allocation. Therefore additional land (0.44ha) required to increase the school site to 2FE is safeguarded within the scheme should HCC wish to deliver as a larger school .