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2/5/24

Leaders Office
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

Dear Councillor Gough,

We have concerns over the future availability of secondary school places in Canterbury and would be grateful for further information and your assurance that these significant risks are being managed.

Our concern can be summarised as follows:

- There is a significant risk that there will be a shortage of secondary school places in Canterbury, particularly in the south of the city.
- There is always uncertainty when planning future education places, but in a scenario where there is high risk of a shortage of places, how can Kent County Council (KCC) justify selling part of the former Chaucer Technology College - an obvious site for further places to be provided if deemed necessary?

Context

Now that Mountfield Park has received a clean planning consent, we are progressing with delivery of the project with early infrastructure works commencing shortly.

We will be investing significantly in secondary education via a contribution to KCC of approx. £17.1m (as at August 2023 - indexed up from £13.6m secured in our section 106 agreement).

It is critical to us that high quality school places are available to the new residents of South Canterbury. Furthermore, we do not want new residents to place an undue burden on local infrastructure, negatively impacting existing residents.

Constraint on places

All but one of the schools within the city are currently at or over capacity.

Your officers kindly took the time to explain to us that many of those pupils are travelling in from surrounding and coastal areas: KCC's strategy is to expand and build new schools in those coastal areas so fewer pupils will need to attend schools in Canterbury, thereby freeing up places in the city for future local residents. Apart from an expansion to Simon Langton Girls, no new secondary provision is planned within the city and there are limited options to expand existing schools.

Your officers also noted that oversubscription criteria based on distance would ensure that new and existing residents would receive places over pupils from further afield.

While this strategy makes sense, there remains significant uncertainty about whether there will be enough places in the city to serve the need.

KCC's own estimates from the Commissioning Plan (24-28) project a deficit of 78 non-selective year 7 places in Canterbury City planning area with no planned infrastructure within the city to address this.

Looking at the southern part of the city specifically, South Canterbury alone is projected to yield 800 students, enough to fill Barton Manor and more. When factoring in existing Barton ward residents and the projected housing growth in the new Local Plan for Merton Park and Ridlands Farm - there may be more prospective pupils than non-selective places available.

Projected housing growth is not limited to the southern part of the city, suggesting other schools will have limited ability to address this shortfall.

To further compound the risk, both St Anselm's and the Archbishop's School have religiously selective oversubscription criteria, meaning local residents cannot rely on the availability of those places.

There are also selective schools in Canterbury which will provide places; however, their selective nature and ability to set admissions policies prioritising academic achievement over proximity (as in the case of Simon Langton Boys) limits their ability to address this risk.

Conclusion

There are many factors which will impact the availability of future school places (school performance, birth rates, delivery of new homes etc.). We do not envy the task of your officers in making plans in this complex and uncertain context. However, high level calculations and KCC's own numbers show there is a significant risk of a future shortage of places in the city.

Questions

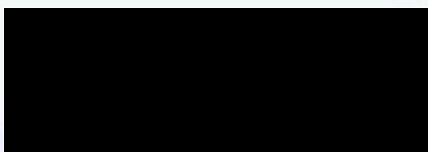
1. How is KCC planning to mitigate this significant risk?
2. In this context of risk and uncertainty, how can KCC's justify for selling a part of the former Chaucer Technology College? This would be an obvious and appropriate place to provide potentially much needed additional places.

3. The Section 77 application for the disposal of part of the former Chaucer Technology School College states the new free school on the adjacent site would have the capacity to expand to 6 forms of entry (FE). Is this still possible (Barton Manor's PAN is currently 5FE)?
4. Please could you share any information KCC has provided to Canterbury City Council (CCC) in response to the following requirement as set out in CCC's pre application response letter (copy enclosed) dated 11th April 2016, which formed part of the submitted Section 77 pack?

"However, whilst the principle of an education facility is accepted in policy, the Council will require evidence the proposal meets the current and predicted future educational need at this location. In terms of a future application, an analysis of capacity to identify a shortfall in places in this area would be required to illustrate the proposal demonstrably meets the identified need now and in the future."

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Billings.

cc
Robert Veale (Education)
Vicky Thistlewood (Development Contributions)

Canterbury City Council
Cllr Alan Baldock (Leader)
Cllr Pat Edwards (Planning Committee Chair)
Suzi Wakeham (Director of People and Place)
Simon Thomas (Head of Planning)

Our Ref: PRE16/00041
Case Officer: [REDACTED]
Telephone: Council Contact Centre 01227 862 178
Email: development.management@canterbury.gov.uk
WebSite: http://www.canterbury.gov.uk
Your ref:
Date: 11 April 2016

GPM Partnership
5-7 Ozengell Place
Eurokent Business Park
Ramsgate
CT12 6PB

Dear [REDACTED]

Reference No: PRE16/00041
Proposal: School development and residential development.
Location: Chaucer Technology School, Spring Lane, Canterbury, CT1 1SU

I write with reference to your request for planning guidance received 25th January 2016.

Any application for planning permission will be considered against policies in the Canterbury District Local Plan First Review 2006, Canterbury District Local Plan Publication Draft 2014, relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The following policies are considered to be of particular relevance to your enquiry, but please be aware these are provided for guidance only and may not be exhaustive:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF has at its heart a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 17 sets out a set of core land-use planning principles that should underpin decision-taking. These include the need to always seek a high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. In addition, the following Sections are considered to be particularly relevant:

- 4 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes.
- 7 – Requiring good design.
- 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 12 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Canterbury District Local Plan, First Review 2006

H1 - Residential development on sites allocated for housing or mixed use. BE1 - High quality designs, sustainable developments and specific design, amenity and landscape criteria to which the Council will have regard: cross-refers to SPGs.

H4 - Council will seek the provision of affordable housing and mixed housing types and sizes on all appropriate sites.

BE3 - Design statements/development briefs to be submitted with applications.

- Sustainability Assessment
- Information regarding the need for the school building(s) and student capacity analysis
- Draft planning obligation/unilateral undertaking

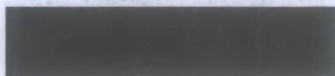
Conclusion

In principle, it is considered the development of the site for both residential and educational uses is acceptable and that the Council could support such a proposal. However, whilst the principle of an education facility is accepted in policy, the Council will require evidence the proposal meets the current and predicted future educational need at this location. In terms of a future application, an analysis of capacity to identify a shortfall in places in this area would be required to illustrate the proposal demonstrably meets the identified need now and in the future. Additional information setting out the overall numbers of pupils proposed would also be required.

You should be advised that any future application will require a robust Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. Also, you should consider servicing and construction management plans. These should provide full assessment to the impacts of the scheme and reasonable measures for controlling and/or mitigating the impact. Additional assessments/reports are outlined above.

I trust this advice is of assistance to you. I remind you that it is an informal officer opinion based on the information available at this time and is for guidance only. The advice does not prejudice any subsequent decision made or action taken by the Council and it relates solely to planning permission. Any application would be subject to public consultation.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the officer.

Planning & Regeneration