

9 March 2017

**Planning Applications Committee  
Update**

Item No.	App no. and site address	Report Recommendation
4 Page 21-52	16/1123 Flexlands, Station Road, Chobham	GRANT subject to conditions

**UPDATE****CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**

Affordable housing – The Council’s Viability Consultants have received further evidence from the applicant in this regard, regarding the site valuation and how the costs associated with the development were arrived at. They have, however, not changed their recommendation, and still conclude that the development is not able to make a contribution towards affordable housing, and as such none is sought on this basis.

Flooding - The Local Lead Flood Authority have removed their objection, and not objected subject to two conditions, which are already included within the report (Conditions 9 and 10). No comments were received from the Environment Agency.

**CONDITIONS:**

An additional condition is proposed as follows:

15. The pavilion hereby approved shall be used as an office and meeting/event room, ancillary to the development, and for no commercial or other purpose without the approval in writing from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to retain control over the development and prevent any adverse impacts on amenity in accordance with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2012.

5 Page 53-72	16/1114 - The Cottage, Hatton Hill, Windlesham	REFUSE
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**UPDATE**

An additional rebuttal letter has been received from the applicant in response to the officer’s report, summarised below. This reiterates many matters already outlined in the applicant’s submission but new points are commented on in turn:

- If Woodcote School is forced to close due to lack of funding, it would not only result in the loss of school places and loss of employment, but also loss of additional community services in which the school provides, such as local youth football club and bridge club, the use of fields for local Primary School Sports Days and support for the local Royal British Legion and local charities through collections in weekly chapel services.
- The benefits arising from the enabling development will be long-term and not short-term, as the refurbishment and upgrading of existing facilities will provide longevity to

the functionality of this accommodation. The future viability of the school will also be guaranteed.

- As a boarding school, Woodcote is limited in the number of pupils it can take by the number of dormitories and beds. To increase numbers significantly the school would need to invest heavily in new accommodation, and the school's not for profit policy makes this impossible without the owning family disposing of assets.

Officer response:

*The additional benefits outlined were not referred to in the original submission and may add further weight towards the Very Special Circumstances (VSC). There may also be a case for VSC based on an enabling case to allow the school to maintain and enhance existing facilities to allow it to continue to prosper. However, as the proposal amounts to a significant floorspace increase of over 300% and additional spread of development in the Green Belt, this case needs to be robust to outweigh this substantial harm to the Green Belt.*

*In this regard, further evidence would be required. For example, no indication has been given to the extent of the existing financial shortfall experienced by the school in its day-to-day running; how much revenue is expected from the enabling development; and, how much of a proportion of this will be allocated to plug this shortfall, or what specific school facilities need upgrade/expansion.*

*Additionally, the financial sustainability of the school's future expansion aspirations as outlined in the application has not been outlined. Permitting the current proposal as VSC may lead to future pressure to redevelop other Green Belt sites owned by the school nearby to enable such expansion and the associated capital and maintenance costs.*

*Overall, the VSC case outlined by the applicant is considered to be imprecise in terms of the amount of funding required; where the enabling funding will be allocated; and, how much of this would contribute to the existing school facilities and future expansion aspirations of the school. A 'masterplan' outlining the school's current needs, opportunities and future aspirations would assist.*

- There is still an intention to carry out regular fundraising, but the benefits are limited.
- The refurbishment of the existing house for rental would provide insufficient funding.
- The school has been advised that any increase in existing fees would be counterproductive due to the competitive local school market.

Officer response:

*As already outlined at paragraph 7.11.3 on page 61 of the officer's report, it is still considered that insufficient detail has been given as to what fundraising activities have been undertaken/ explored and how this is insufficient to maintain the school. Similarly, no detail has been given in respect of the cost required to refurbish the existing house and the expected rental income. This is considered important as the house has been vacant for over one year. No appraisal of the existing fee structure vs those of competing schools has been provided to qualify that increasing school fees would be counter-productive.*

- The new development will be contained to the roadside/frontage of the site, and although the residential floorspace will be increased from existing, there will be no spread of built form from the established linear form of development adjacent to Hatton Hill. Therefore there will be little impact on openness because the site is not currently open in its nature.

Officer response:

*Very limited weight is given to this argument. The significant expanse in footprint and spread of development across the site has already been outlined in the officer's report and the concentration of development towards the roadside does not diminish this harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The primary indicator of whether a development harms*

*openness is the size of built form and not how open a site is or its relationship with neighbouring buildings.*

- Similar schemes have been granted within the Borough at Camberley Heath Golf Club (13/0100) and in the neighbouring Hart Borough.

Officer response:

*The above planning permission for four new dwellings at Camberley Heath Golf Club related to Designated Green Space within a defined Settlement Area, not Green Belt. Therefore, the material planning considerations are different and in any event, it involved a total encroachment of only 0.008% of the whole golf course site forming the Designated Green Space. Additionally, the proposal involved the loss of several existing warehouse-style buildings which appeared to add further weight in favour of the proposal. The case outlined in Hart Borough also granting permission for four dwellings was obviously subject to different local planning policies and it is therefore difficult to comment on how its merits relate to the current proposal. Notwithstanding this, each application must be considered on its own site-specific planning merits.*

- In the event that Councillors agree to the proposed development then they will enter into a S106 Agreement in order to secure financial contributions towards strategic access management and monitoring (SAMM) measures, in accordance with the requirements of the Surrey Heath Borough Council's Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD.

Officer response:

*The payment of the £842 financial contribution required towards SAMM would overcome the second reason for refusal. In this instance, it is not considered necessary to secure this payment via legal agreement assuming that the applicant is willing to pay this amount up front. Should Members be minded to grant permission, the SAMM payment could be secured under delegated authority.*

6 Page 73-76 & addendum paper	PRB – Deed of variation	
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**UPDATE**

SCC Highways have provided comments, explaining why the deed of variation proposed is considered acceptable. These are appended for information.

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