



HANBOROUGH ACTION GROUP

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 15/03341/FUL

1 November 2015

Location : Land East of Hanborough Bowling Club
Roosevelt Road Long Hanborough Oxfordshire

Proposal : Creation of a playing field for Hanborough
Manor School on part of a field in agricultural use and an
area of grassland. Erection of storage shed

Introduction

Hanborough Action Group consists of residents of Long Hanborough and Church Hanborough who are concerned about the potential impact that unsustainable developments will have on the parish of Hanborough, its environs and those who use its services.

At the present time there are a number of proposals to develop large scale residential schemes in Long Hanborough and Freeland. Several await decision: one has gone to appeal, while others have received outline consent. These developments will place pressure on local service providers, none more so than the Hanborough Manor School.

The school site is extremely confined and the purpose of the present application is to provide a playing field away from the school, thus releasing land on the main site such that additional classrooms can be built to increase its capacity.

This document does not comment on any of the proposed developments, which are subject to strong local opposition, but simply restricts itself to issues relevant to this application (15/03341/FUL).

Where only figures are shown in parentheses, they refer to clauses in the applicant's Planning Statement.

Visual Impact

Figure 1 shows Kents Bank, a recent development of affordable homes in a cul-de-sac with views of surrounding farmland and Pinsley Wood, an ancient woodland and formerly part of the Wychwood Forest. The present application proposes that the land at the end of the cul-de-sac becomes the new playing field, which will be entirely enclosed by a 2.1m high welded mesh fence with a 6m wide gateway linking it with the end of the road directly ahead in the photograph shown in Figure 1 (7.2).

Superimposed on the photograph in Figure 1 is an artist's impression of the site fence as viewed from Kents Bank demonstrating how it will obscure views of the agricultural land and Pinsley Wood.

In addition there is a well-used footpath from Long Hanborough to Church Hanborough, which follows the eastern boundary of the site and the applicant also proposes to relocate a permissive path which presently crosses the site from its current location to its western and southern boundaries. On both paths walkers will have the weld mesh fence immediately to one side.

Looking towards the houses in Kents Bank in the distance, Figure 2 shows the southern and eastern boundaries of this development and the impact its weld mesh fence will have on these footpaths.



Figure 1

Northern Boundary of Site as viewed from Kents Bank with Superimposed Fence



Figure 2

Southern and Eastern Boundaries of Site with Superimposed Fence

The Planning Statement makes a loose commitment to plant native hedging to provide a landscaped edge to the wire mesh fence, but it will take a very long time to grow to 2.1m. Figure 2 shows that, even when fully grown, an angular hedge will look odd and out of place in the middle of a field, and there will be inevitable gaps showing the weld mesh fence and weld mesh gateways.

It is obvious that the proposed playing field is prominently sited and will have a very strong visual impact.

Site Amenities

The application is for full consent. In consequence there will be limited opportunity for revision unless a new planning application is submitted.

This site is 250m away from the main school, but the only facility proposed is an equipment storage shed. The playing field will be used by children aged 4 upwards, but there will be no toilet and hand washing facilities, no provision for drinking water, no arrangements to store clothes and no ability to shelter from the elements.

No detail is provided as to first aid and emergency access arrangements.

Moving Between Sites

The difficulties of moving a group of 30 or more young children between the school and the new playing field cannot be underestimated. It will be a time consuming process to get them dressed, toileted and then transferred in a safe and secure manner 250m along residential streets and, on one of the proposed routes, partly across a public recreation ground. The applicant in their planning statement (2.3) states that “it is expected that the children would walk from the school to the playing field under the supervision of a teacher.” This view is highly unrealistic, more than one supervisor would be required to ensure child safety and security.

The applicant’s gross underestimate of the time and effort involved in moving a large group of excited young children between the two sites is compounded by their statement that Riely Close is a cul-de-sac and has very little vehicular traffic (2.3). This is not the case, with cars being frequently parked in the road when residents visit the Methodist Church, Post Office, Dentist and Fish and Chip Shop, in addition to visitors to the school itself. Cars come and go throughout the day, and the parking alternatives to street parking in Riely Close are extremely limited.

The school has a car park capacity of only nine cars with 26 present member of staff shown on its website. The enlarged school will require more staff and it is therefore probable that even more staff will park in the council car park opposite the school, placing further pressure on parking in the area with more people having to park in the street. This problem will be compounded at the beginning and end of the school day as parents collect their children.

The Riely Close footpath is narrow and thus, for two of the routes proposed by the applicant, parking and cars will endanger transferring children between the sites.

On 19 October 2015, Rashid Bbosa in the Transport Development Control Group at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) stated in an email to West Oxfordshire District Council that, *“On the basis of the information provided, Oxfordshire County Council as Local Highway Authority do not wish to object to the grant of planning application from a traffic and highway safety point of view.”* This view contradicts local experience and seems to be solely based on clause 2.3 of the applicant’s planning statement which states that Riely Close has very little vehicular traffic. This clause, a purely qualitative statement, is the only one submitted in documentation supporting the application where traffic issues are mentioned. It would seem to provide little hard evidence to justify OCC’s decision, giving no information on traffic flows, parking and other health and safety issues. West Oxfordshire District Council planners are encouraged to seek further clarification of OCC’s stance in this matter.

Disabled Access

The wheelchair accessible route shown in red on drawing SK010 is not, at present, a practical option. A number of dropped kerbs will have to be installed in Riely Close and Kents Bank and there is no footpath for the part of the route at the beginning of Kents Bank. Thus a wheelchair will have to be pushed on the public highway for this section of the route.

Summary

The above comments cast doubt on the practicality of the proposals and further thought has to be given to the visual impact, site amenities, the process of moving children between the sites and disabled access.

Hanborough Action Group have deliberately not commented on the educational impact of these proposals, which is a matter for the school, the parents and OCC, although it seems to be considerable and serious. It has simply sought to highlight issues that should have been better thought through by the applicant before advancing such a scheme.

Hanborough Action Group believes that, before considering this application, a site visit by the Uplands Planning Sub-Committee is essential to appreciate the issues arising and impact of the current proposals. They would then appreciate the validity of the above arguments and why Hanborough Action Group strenuously objects to this application.

Paragraph 74 of the NPPF provides clear and unequivocal statutory guidance regarding playing fields:

“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*

- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.”*

It is clear that this application meets none of the three exemptions provided for in the National Planning Policy Framework in any way whatsoever.