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Officer Comment on KEPA letter of 24/07/15

KEPA

In respect of the assessment of primary pupils educational need the Planning Authority relied on the Education Policy and Development Committee report of 27 January 2015 which at item 8 appendix 2 submitted for approval the most recent statistics on primary school places. These statistics showed for the relevant planning areas 1&2 a surplus of place as follows: 2015/16 (+20), 2016/17 (+41), 2017/18 (+39). An additional 60 places from the Langley Park primary school which has been approved and plans to open in 2016/17 and which falls into the same planning area were excluded. We are also cognizant of the fact that these statistics already include a 5% buffer of additional places to accommodate parental choice and also include a 8% buffer for pupils who will choose private provision.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The local authority uses education planning areas to assist it in its school place planning. These areas are used by Government and the Greater London Authority to project future demand, record fluctuations in pupil numbers and inform proposals for meeting need.

Harris Beckenham Primary Academy is based centrally within education planning area 2. The primary relevant information in determining the need for the school is the demand for school places in education planning area 2. The relevance of the consideration of demand for places from other education planning areas decreases, based on school proximities, the further a school is located from the planning area boundary. Conversely a school located on a planning boundary may satisfy demand from more than one education planning area. Any new school or expansion has an effect on the availability of school places and the proximity distance a school's offers places to local children.

The proximity distances for schools offering places surrounding Harris Primary Academy have reduced in recent years. In 2015 Bromley Road's proximity is 0.682 miles (1FE), Clare House 0.327 miles (2FE), Marian Vian 0.624 (3FE+bulge) and Unicorn 0.593 (2FE). Without Harris Primary Academy Beckenham there would be a shortage of school places in central Beckenham surrounding the Manor Way Harris Beckenham site.

In providing primary school places the local authority needs to provide sufficient schools places that also satisfy the statutory requirement to provide a reasonable offer of a place to each child. This needs to include consideration of the travel distance and times for a child to access a school place. The Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance - Statutory guidance for local authorities July 2014 (DfE) sets a statutory walking distance of 2 miles if below the age of 8 and 3 miles if aged between 8 and 16. The guidance also sets out that transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time and best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes. Based on the above criteria, many of the schools in education planning area 1 would be outside of consideration due to the travelling times and distances involved.

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For the reasons set out above, with Harris Beckenham located centrally in education planning area 2 and the distances involved in accessing many schools in neighbouring planning areas being 'unreasonable', in this instance we believe that using education planning area 2 as the primary dataset provides the most robust basis for assessing the need for the school.

Based upon consideration of the GLA data for education planning area 2 (Beckenham), need for the school can be demonstrated as in each year from 2015/16 through to 2020/21 there would be a deficit of places if Harris Beckenham Primary Academy was not open. This deficit would increase from 13 places in 2015/16 to 53 places by 2020/21. Furthermore, if the 5% uplift for contingency and choice is added in line with the Council's policy to ensure adequate provision in school place planning to meet its statutory duty for sufficient school places, the deficit rises from 35 in 2015/16 to 75 in 2020/21. Crucially on this basis in 2018/19 further provision will have to be made in education planning area 2 beyond the 60 additional places at Harris Primary Academy Beckenham. This justifies the need for Harris Beckenham Primary Academy now and the need for Langley Park Primary Free School or another provider at a later date.

As the matter of considering education planning areas 1 & 2 has been raised, our analysis of current and future need demonstrates that there is a need for Harris Beckenham Primary Academy when considering both planning areas. The planned admission numbers table from the Jan 2015 Primary School Development Plan indicate a 20 place surplus (less than 1 FE) in 2015/16 Planning areas 1 & 2 subject to the provision of

- 60 places (2FE) at Harris Beckenham, and
- 60 places (2FE) at Crystal Palace Primary School, and
- 30 place additional bulge class at Stewart Fleming,
- 30 place additional bulge class at James Dixon.

However, the opening of The Crystal Palace Primary School has been deferred until at least 2016 in the absence of a temporary or permanent site.

The planned admission numbers table from the Jan 2015 Primary School Development Plan indicate a 41 place surplus in 16/17 and a 39 place surplus in 17/18, both equating to just over 1 form of entry, subject to the provision of

- 60 places (2FE) at Harris Beckenham, and
- 60 places (2FE) at Crystal Palace Primary School, and
- 30 place (1FE) permanent expansion at Stewart Fleming,
- 30 place (1FE) permanent expansion at James Dixon

However, only Harris Beckenham currently has the benefit of planning permission (subject to possible JR). Whilst the Jan 2015 report recommended the feasibility of expansions required to provide an additional 1 FE at both Stewart Fleming and James Dixon be investigated with the Governors of these schools, they have yet to obtain planning permission (Application at Stewart Fleming currently awaiting determination).

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Additionally, assuming a 2016 opening of The Crystal Palace Primary School, it will recruit by ballot within a 1.5 mile diameter (intended to be centred on the junction of Crystal Palace Parade and Westow Hill - SE19 1TX). Given the admission point of SE19 1TX the places available to Bromley residents are likely to be significantly lower than the 60 places in the January 2015 Education PDS report. The reason that Crystal Palace Free School was included within the report with 60 places was because, although the school was initially approved with the London Borough of Croydon, discussion with the proposer and Education Funding Agency suggested that school may possibly locate in Bromley. To date no site has been secured or planning consent sought.

Regarding the 8% of children who will be being privately educated. The Council uses GLA school roll projections which are based on school level roll data which exclude private rolls. The privately educated children would be additional to the pupils projected by the GLA and were not factored into the statistics presented to members.

KEPA

At the point of the consideration of this application it is indisputably the fact according to the Authority's own statistics that there is no educational need for 2015/16. There is equally no need in 2016/17. The picture in 2017/18 is less clear cut. If the application was refused there would be a deficit of 21 places in 2017/18 and approximately the same for the next 10 years. However that deficit takes no account of the approved places at Langley Primary school. The Authority argued that these places cannot be considered because they are not currently in existence. Whilst this would be reasonable if the application at hand were for 2015/16 places it wholly unreasonable when the application is for 2017/18. In any professional environmental or forward planning one must make reasonable judgements. Indeed the projection of pupils demand itself is based on future judgement and not present fact. We maintain that in any professional private business and public policy environment it is wholly unreasonable to simply dismiss this planned provision, particularly considering that Langley school has made it clear that they will open in 2016/17 and that they are able to do so in temporary accommodation with out planning permission resulting from the relaxation of the GPDO.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The applicants refer to the availability of a further 60 places available through the proposed Langley Park Primary indicated as coming on stream in 2016/17. Since the January 2015 report the Langley Park Primary School has now been approved to open by the Secretary of State for Education, however, whilst there will be a Local Plan consultation in Sept 2015 indicating the proposed allocation on the existing Langley Schools Complex there is a significant Local Plan process culminating in a public Inquiry before any Local Plan allocation can be adopted and no planning application has been submitted. With regard to the use of temporary accommodation this is indeed an option that any Free School with approval from the Secretary of State for Education could explore, however, this is reliant on finding suitable temporary accommodation. Failure to find suitable accommodation can

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result in deferred opening as has been the case with both Harris Beckenham and The Crystal Palace Free School. The Council has received no notification of a proposed temporary opening under permitted development to accommodate Langley Park Primary in 2016.

Harris Primary Academy Beckenham was approved in a previous Free School wave with an original target opening date of September 2014, deferred until 2015. The school has the benefit of an approved temporary permission guaranteeing its ability to open and places have been offered by the school in line with the Council Primary School Development Plan. In the section above with have provided justification for Harris Primary Academy Beckenham on the basis of need considering both the local education planning area (2 – Beckenham) and need across education planning areas 1 & 2. When adding the 5% uplift in places to allow for contingency and choice the current projections provide justification over the period 2015/16 to 2020/21 for both Harris Primary Academy Beckenham and additional provision that could be Langley Free School. Furthermore, the Council needs to ensure that the place are available when need requires. There is a need for the school from September 2015/16 and there no other provision is available to meet the demonstrable need.

In summary the planned admission numbers table from the Jan 2015 Primary School Development Plan indicate proposals for 6FE to accommodate the permanent increase in reception intake. Currently only 2FE at Harris Beckenham benefits from permission (subject to JR).

Whilst Langley Park Primary Academy has received approval from the Secretary of State for Education past experience has demonstrated that an inability to find temporary accommodation can lead to a deferral of opening. It should be noted that both Langley Park School for Boys (114%) and Langley Park School for Girls (103.3%) are currently operating above their premises' capacity based on the autumn 2014 school census. This would impact the ability of either school to accommodate the Free School within the existing school buildings without expansion and/or remodelling works that would require planning consent.

Furthermore, the evidence above clearly demonstrates the argument is not about either/or Harris Beckenham Primary Academy or Langley Park Primary Academy, but that both schools are required based on the current GLA projections.

KEPA

Turning to the final matter – the balance of educational need against damage to the Conservation Area. The planning committee implicitly concluded that a future deficit of 21 places in 2017/18, ignoring the 60 places of the Langley Primary school was enough of an educational need to outweigh damage to the Conservation Area based on erroneous analysis of that damage. Following on from the paragraphs above the planning Committee were unequivocally unable to make that judgement because of the erroneous statistics and reports provided by the planning and traffic officers. The correct action would have been to re-schedule the committee meeting once the reports had been accurately re-produced.

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The information above, responding to concerns raised by KEPA, provide additional explanation to support the understanding of the statistics which were presented to the planning committee. The statistics were not erroneous, based on the detailed analysis of the Planned Admission Numbers by Primary Education Planning Areas, and provided members of the planning committee with an accurate picture of the need upon which they were able to base a judgement and make their decision.