

## **WESTGATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

### **COMMENTS OF WGRA COMMITTEE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLL - BISHOP LUFFA LAND SWOP**

#### New School and changes to existing WHF Masterplan

We are very supportive of the aspiration to upgrade the facilities of Bishop Luffa School. We note that a rebuild would achieve a better designed school and carbon neutrality as well as a significant reduction in maintenance costs.

We understand however from discussions with the head, Austen Hindman, that he is open minded about whether school facilities are improved by way of new build or by the school remaining on the existing site and upgrading existing buildings. Planning permissions to improve the school's facilities were recently obtained. At least some of the funding for this could come from selling the school land required by the developers for construction of the Southern Access Road.

We also understand that in these circumstances the lower part of Centurion Way could be left in its current position with swinging gates added for use when pupils are crossing to the new playing fields.

One reason given for moving the school from its current location is that residents have complained about parent parking on nearby residential streets at school drop off and pick up times. This could be remedied by implementing a School Streets Scheme:

<https://www.mumsforlungs.org/about-school-streets>

Locating the school further out of town would result in more journeys by car rather than cycling and walking from the city centre/station as at present. Additionally, rather than being set back from the road as the existing school now is, the new school would be located directly next to the busy Southern Access Road giving rise to concerns about safety and pollution.

We also question the desirability of moving the primary school out of the new community centre (where it would be a driver of footfall) to a site on the periphery (where it will be a driver of car use).

We note from the current online consultation on the Community Centre that the present site allows room for expansion of the school in Phase II. Would the relocated primary school be of similar size to that currently proposed for the expanded school?

You have told us that Sports England is considering the idea of a 400m all- weather track to replace the primary school at the Community Centre because Chichester is considered short of such facilities.

We understand that Chichester College in partnership with Chichester Runners and Athletic Club has a 300 metre sports running track planned. This is to be located close to other sports facilities at the College and create a 'sports hub' for the community. Has this been taken into account?

### Redevelopment of the existing Bishop Luffa School site

#### Site suitability

The development proposed will potentially increase the scale of the WHF development (already the largest development in the city) by a further 25%. We understand that the Chichester parish housing target (which will determine the 5- year housing supply required from the city) is not currently available and will be published for public consultation next March.

We are told in the background paper that once this housing target is known 'we can assess sites to determine which are most suitable to allocate'. This process should be followed. It is not appropriate to ask residents to consider the Bishop Luffa site as a suitable development site in isolation. All potentially available sites within the city should be taken into account in considering how such housing need may best be accommodated.

In making any assessment of comparative suitability account needs to be taken of the benefit of these green fields to our streetscape and the character of our local neighbourhoods as well as the rural setting they provide to the entrance to Centurion Way.

The site at present has a significant amount of green space with mature trees and well established hedgerows. It should not be assumed without any assessment that the site has 'low ecological value'.

At current buildout rates WHF Phases I and II (before adding this proposed development) will not be completed until 2035. Given that development sites need to be considered 'deliverable' within the 5 year housing period to be counted against the target would this development actually contribute to meeting the 5 year housing target?

#### Number of homes

Residents are asked to agree that the site is suitable for up to 400 homes based on a density figure of up to 55 dwellings per hectare. This seems to us to be very high. By way of comparison we note that the Chichester District Council Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2020 uses a baseline estimate of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph). Whitehouse Farm neighbourhoods appear to range from a highest density of 34-45 dph to medium (25-35 dph ) and low (20-25 dph). This is shown on the plan attached to the end of this note by dark brown, light brown and yellow colouring respectively. It is notable that lower density neighbourhoods are located around the edges of the development in areas closest to existing communities.

We understand from Councillors that to achieve this density building heights of up to four storeys will be needed. No mention is made of this in the proposal.

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This density and massing may be appropriate for an inner city environment but is not appropriate for our residential neighbourhood. Any redevelopment of the site should take account of the densities of existing adjoining communities which we believe to be significantly lower than that now being proposed. We note that CDC planning policy (paragraph 4.8 CDC Interim Position Statement for Housing Development) requires that 'sites should be of a scale and density appropriate to the adjoining settlement'.

No plans or other information has been provided to show the nature of the development: what would be the type and mix of housing, what green space, amenity areas and community facilities would be included? Any development of the site would need to include a significant element of green landscaping to retain as much of the green feel of the existing site as possible.

#### Traffic implications and Southern Access Road

We are not told how traffic would access the development: will this be via the Southern Access Road? Also what would be the impact of the additional traffic (on top of the 1600 homes already envisaged for WHF)? Our existing traffic infrastructure is already over capacity in rush hours.

Paragraph 2.6 of the proposal implies that routing the Southern Access Road along Westgate into the Westgate/ Sherbourne road mini-roundabout has been agreed in principle for planning purposes. It has not been agreed by West Sussex County Council as Highways Authority nor is it accepted by residents. Please can this misleading impression be corrected.

#### Neighbourhood Plan process

We would like to play a full role in the neighbourhood planning process and believe the Neighbourhood Plan is very important for our City.

To do this residents need to have a proper opportunity to debate Neighbourhood Plan issues and to be provided to appropriate information on which to base their decisions. We do not believe that either these requirements has been met in relation to this poll.

There has been no meaningful public consultation on the significant variation proposed to the Whitehouse Farm Masterplan (which was itself the subject of extensive consultation before it was finalised) nor on the Bishop Luffa redevelopment proposal, a major development in its own right. In relation to the latter residents are asked to vote on the suitability of this site for residential development with no information on the form this development might take. No mention is made of the fact that the upper density level is very

high and there is no discussion of the implications flowing from this.

This failure to provide appropriate information casts into doubt the validity of any decision reached on the basis of such a vote

