

ANNEX B**Planning and Regulatory Committee
15 November 2017****Item 4: Public Question Time**

Submitted by: Mr Michael Taplin

I live in Bridge Barn Lane, Woking, where Goldsworth Primary School is located. Parents and the local community have serious concerns for public safety, in relation to parking overload in Bridge Barn Lane at school drop-off and pick-up times.

The heightened concerns today stem from the planning consent for expansion of the school back in 2013. We understand that Goldsworth Primary School and Surrey County Council, as joint applicants, are in breach of planning control. The planning consent (WO/2013/0033) was subject to a condition to implement in full a comprehensive School Travel Plan (Version 4, dated 16 Apr 2013). This was not implemented.

Goldsworth Primary School is one of many in Surrey that have been granted planning consent for expansion. In every case, a key condition relates to the implementation, maintenance, monitoring and development of a School Travel Plan, in order that the potential traffic and parking impacts of the development are minimized.

My question is, where has the planning procedure failed (and subsequent monitoring and enforcement, also failed) with a Surrey County Council Primary School having been in breach of planning control for four years since planning consent was given, thereby endangering children outside the school on a daily basis?

Response:

The Committee are grateful to Mr Taplin for bringing the issues raised by Goldsworth School to their attention and for the detailed work he has carried out on the issue.

Planning permission was granted in 2013 for an expansion from a 2 form entry (420 place) to a 3 form entry (630 place) primary school. A number of conditions were placed on this planning approval, including Condition 5 which stated the following:

The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied unless the revised School Travel Plan version 4 dated 16 April 2013 is being implemented in full, and the Plan shall thereafter be maintained monitored and developed in full and complete accordance with its provisions.

This condition was placed on the approval in consultation with the County Highway Authority who advised that the Travel Plan was acceptable in the final form submitted and suggested the wording of the condition. They did not consider that further travel plan related conditions were required. The County Council acting as County Highway Authority is a statutory consultee in the planning application process, charged with considering the impact of a proposal on highway safety, parking associated with schools on local roads where speeds are low. These commonly raise issues of amenity due to congestion.

The condition did not require the submission of further details but for the school to implement, maintain, monitor and develop the school travel plan as part of the approval. Such a condition is a typical response to managing the traffic impacts, either safety or amenity ones, of school expansion proposals. A condition can only legitimately require something which is in the applicants control to deliver. A travel plan condition is therefore only enforceable in relation to actions it proposes not the targets it sets.

ANNEX B

The County Council as planning authority does not monitor all conditions attached to all planning permissions as a matter of course. It will, however, always investigate any complaint made that a condition has been breached. No resources were available for routine monitoring of planning conditions until June 2015, when a Monitoring Officer post was created in the Planning Team with specific responsibilities for the County Council's own development proposals. This reflects the large programme of school expansions then taking place. The scope for reviewing earlier permissions has been limited, but that does not preclude the investigation of specific complaints.

A Monitoring and Enforcement Protocol was adopted by the Planning and Regulatory Committee at its meeting on 18 October 2017. The protocol sets out the process for monitoring compliance and remedial action. The protocol states that before formal enforcement action is considered, the County Planning Authority will normally provide an applicant with the opportunity to remedy any identified breach of planning conditions. The County Planning Authority has only recently received Mr Taplin's complaint and is in the early stages of its investigation. As part of its monitoring process, it liaises with the Safer Travel Team (the team responsible for assisting schools in delivering, maintaining and reviewing their travel plans, including ones which are the subject of planning conditions). The Safer Travel Team have made a number of attempts to engage with Goldsworth School both on their own account and as a result of their own contacts with Mr Taplin. It is only recently, following discussions between the Head and the Safer Travel Team Leader that the school have accepted the need for remedial action in terms of taking forward its School Travel Plan on the lines set out in the document submitted with the planning application.

For the moment, the County Planning Authority are satisfied that progress is being made towards resolution of the breach, albeit at a relatively early stage, and that the breach is being followed up in accordance with the adopted protocol. However, the limitations of a School Travel Plan must be recognised. It is a tool to mitigate traffic issues related to schools and will only rarely solve issues completely.

Tim Hall
Chairman of the Planning and Regulatory Committee