

Emmer Green Residents Association
The Heights Location Statement – Bugs Bottom / Hemdean Valley feasibility.
January 14th 2015

A small part of Emmer Green is within catchment area, so we have been asked by the EFA to consider **conditions and compromises that might go some way to offsetting adverse impacts, if after a democratic public consultation, this is the chosen site.**

We would expect representative bodies of all four* potential sites to have done the same.
(*five as of March 2015)

There appears to be considerable strength of feeling in Emmer Green as a whole against this location.

In summary the concerns are:

1. Loss of ecologically valuable land and adverse impact on landscape. (The Hemdean Valley is currently designated as 'Public and Strategic Open Space' under policy SA16 and also designated as a 'Landscape Feature'.)
2. Traffic generation.
3. Possible unacceptable "knock on" development in the area.

The school is called The Heights and it is intended to serve families who live in Caversham Heights. A valley location would seem a paradox. If this was the chosen site Caversham Heights, geographically, would still not have a school.

In due course we will have the points we are making in mind when we consider the Information Packs that are to be produced.

The School

1.The school should be located where it has minimum visual impact, ideally at the southern end of the valley to the west of the path, thus leaving the vast area of open meadowland intact.

2.The school design should be sympathetic to its surroundings and its construction and materials sustainable and carbon neutral, incorporating eco-friendly policies.

3.Maintenance of school grounds and school will need to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the local wildlife etc. i.e. no pesticides to be sprayed

4.No mature trees to be felled to accommodate the school and any limited felling necessary, replacement like for like, with additional planting to screen buildings.

5.The school to have a dedicated wildlife area to educate the children about their surroundings. Studies at the appropriate time of year for the wildlife / plant life needs to be completed to ensure minimal if no disruption to the various species and consideration of any endangered species

5.Hard surfaces to be kept to a minimum and of environmentally friendly materials. In particular the staff car park where innovative surfaces (eg what they do in some National Trust properties) make it look natural.

6. Lighting - this may be necessary for security of the school, but careful consideration needs to be given, so nearby wildlife is not affected.

7. Agreement needs to be reached on the final size of the school. No expansion at a later date involving temporary buildings.

Access and Transport

1. The bollards and central path to remain intact – no through route between Caversham Heights and Emmer Green.

2. Dedicated drop off points at the top of paths leading to Kidmore Road (closest proximity to school), and introduction of a supervised walking bus.

3. Parking restrictions along the built up side of Hunters Chase and in the vicinity of the school.

4. A turning circle to be provided at the bottom of Hunters Chase.

5. Adequate gritting of hillside paths and access roads in winter.

6. Considerations given to additional traffic which may use St Barnabas and Tredegar Road to access the school. One of the current problems is immense traffic congestion with parents and children from Caversham Heights driving through Emmer Green to Emmer Green School.

7. No construction traffic through Emmer Green.

Legal Complexities and Compensatory Land Considerations

I feel at the moment we do not know enough about this. We understand there are very complex legal issues regarding Bugs Bottom land. We would like to understand the financial implications of changing the use of this land, and absolute protection for untouched land.

We have grave concerns about the wider implications of encroaching into South Oxfordshire for either building or compensatory land. The county boundary is a natural barrier and we already have an example whereby gardens were extended over the border, and now planning permission for a dwelling in South Oxfordshire, adjacent to those extended gardens has been granted.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the above, and any other issues that may arise, with the EFA as part of the consultation process.