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Subject: Planning Comment for 160670

Comment for Planning Application 160670  
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Comment : With respect to the development of 46 apartments and 15 affordable housing units at May Baird Avenue, we understand that Ryden, on behalf of CALA Homes, have applied for the obligations regarding developer contributions associated with primary education in the local catchment to be discharged. When planning permission was granted in August 2015, this was subject to the condition that the developer would pay a contribution sufficient for permanent accommodation for four pupils, i.e. #163;92,000 (at a rate of #163;23,000 per pupil), based on the forecast that the development would result in the requirement for additional capacity at Skene Square School. This was based on the 2013 school roll forecasts. According to the 2014 school roll forecast, the school will be over-capacity by 2018 (the developer currently anticipates completion by June 2017). However, we understand that this is based on a maximum capacity that would require general purpose spaces such as the library, IT suite, etc. to be given over to classroom space and would in fact be of substantial detriment to the pupils of the school. We query therefore whether the maximum capacity has been calculated in line with the guidance on 'Determining Primary School Capacity#8217; issued by the Scottish Government in October 2014.

From the 2014 school roll forecast, the total roll for 2015 was expected to be 313, with a Primary 1 input of 55 pupils. The current school roll is in fact 319, with the Primary 1 intake last August being 58 pupils. This demonstrates an underestimation in the school roll forecast. In addition, the future school roll is subject to considerable uncertainty on two points: 1. Due to the recent downturn affecting the oil industry and related employment in Aberdeen, we can anticipate an increase in the number of pupils in state schools as opposed to independent schools. 2. The school has a relatively high proportion of out-of-zone pupils, attracting parents that work in the city centre and may therefore be subject to more significant fluctuations in school roll than those schools with a high proportion of in-zone pupils.

We understand that under Clause 3.1.2 of the section 75 Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and the developer, any part of the Primary Education Contribution not utilised will be refunded, with interest accrued, to the developer. We therefore believe that based on the current uncertainty in the future school roll, discharging the developer obligations at this early stage would be an unnecessary risk regarding the provision of adequate capacity in the near future and we urge the Council to refuse this application.

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