

Principal: Victoria Musgrave M.Ed., FRSA

Mrs Carole Baker
Planning Department South Norfolk Council
South Norfolk House
Swan Lane
Long Stratton
Norfolk, NR15 2XE



9th February 2012

Dear Mrs Baker

The following comments are made on behalf of Wymondham High Academy Trust in respect of South Norfolk Council's consultation on the Wymondham Area Action Plan. We look forward to the opportunity of discussing these points further with you in our meeting at 10am on Friday 9th March at your offices.

Wymondham High Academy is in the middle of Wymondham and is at the heart of its community. Having a successful secondary school adds much to the attractiveness of Wymondham as a place to live and the success of Wymondham High Academy is recognised county wide and nationally. We firmly believe that the Wymondham Area Action Plan should have as one of its cornerstones, the successful development of the academy site and integration of it into any plans.

We would also like to clarify the roles of Norfolk County Council Children's Services and Wymondham High Academy in this process since the relationship between these two bodies changed after Wymondham High School converted to Wymondham High Academy Trust in September 2011. In summary the relationship is now as follows:

- Norfolk County Council Children's Services has ongoing responsibility for planning, providing and funding sufficient pupil places across the county. This is unchanged.
- Wymondham High Academy Trust has a long term lease for the academy site and has primary responsibility for the planning and development of the site.
- Norfolk County Council Children's Services recognises that Wymondham High Academy is the main provider for secondary school (11-18 years) places in Wymondham.

Given these points, we believe that it is crucial for South Norfolk planning to consult with the academy directly and not rely solely on consultations with Norfolk County Council Children's Services to give a complete picture of how the academy site should develop and fit within wider plans for Wymondham town.

Wymondham High Academy Trust in partnership with Norfolk County Council Children's Services and Norfolk Property Services has developed a 15 year strategic plan to set out how

the academy will address the challenges of growing from the current 1650 pupils to 2050 pupils as Wymondham increases by 2200 houses. In the context of this strategic plan for the site, we would make the following points which we believe are relevant to the Wymondham Area Action Plan.

1. Overall growth of Wymondham needs to be capped at 2200 houses or a new secondary school will be required.

The strategic plan for the academy site can cope (just) with the currently planned 2200 houses which will bring an additional 400 pupils into the academy over the next 15 years. This will take the school to 2050 pupils which is right at the top end of, and arguably slightly above, what is feasible for a secondary school. Growth beyond this will require a more radical solution to secondary places in Wymondham bearing in mind the following.

- Splitting 11-16 education from 17-18 (sixth form) education is highly undesirable educationally. The academy would strongly oppose any approach which relied on this.
- Managing a split site, even for such things as playing fields, is very difficult for a school to manage and, again, would be opposed by the academy.
- The academy site itself is constrained on all sides and cannot develop other than to consume more of its playing field resources – which are already less than would be ideal for a school of 2050 pupils (see point 3 below).

The strong view of Wymondham High Academy governors is that the growth of Wymondham should be capped at 2200 additional homes.

2. New development in Wymondham needs to be linked by safe pedestrian and cycle routes to the academy site.

Pupils within 3 miles of Wymondham High Academy travel to the academy primarily by foot, bike or car – with public transport being poor to non-existent. Pupils beyond this limit travel by school bus in the main with a minority travelling by car. The academy, situated as it is within a residential area, is poorly served by roads and parking and we therefore encourage as many pupils as possible to travel by foot or bike and actively discourage travel by car. This policy also has obvious benefits in terms of health and the environment.

To help with this strategy we would strongly urge that the Wymondham Area Action Plan takes as part of its fundamental planning that any housing developments are linked by safe pedestrian and cycles routes to the academy.

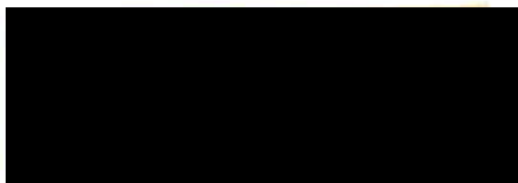
3. Extend the sports and play facilities within Wymondham.

The academy site is 84,000m² in size. This is 36,000m² smaller than the recommended site size for a school of 2050 pupils of around 120,000m². This means that, although we believe we can cope with the smaller than ideal playing fields in terms of delivering the curriculum, the academy site cannot offer as much playing field space to the community as it ideally would.

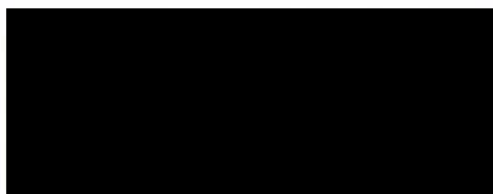
To compensate for this we would strongly recommend the following:

- South Norfolk Council works with the academy to develop a shared all weather pitch adjacent to the leisure centre and on academy land. This development is part of the academy's strategic plan.
- In addition to the green spaces that would be provided anyway as part of developing 2200 new houses, South Norfolk Council commits to providing an additional 36,000m² of sports and play areas to compensate for the shortfall in the academy site.
- South Norfolk Council commits to not allow development on any open green spaces within 10 minutes walking distance of the school. While no plans currently exist for the academy to use offsite playing field facilities, it is quite possible that these will be required in future. Development on sites that could be walked to from the school as part of a PE lesson should be strongly discouraged.

Yours sincerely



Alex Hunter
Chair of Governors



Victoria Musgrave
Principal