

1 July 2020

Dear Councillor

Oakhurst Rise – concerns about misleading comments

All development is potentially controversial, and we appreciate the tough job councillors have to weigh things up and consider all angles. It is clear that FoCK has influence, is passionate and has constructed what to some may seem a compelling narrative. Nevertheless, we feel their most recent submission serves to muddy the waters about the ownership and public accessibility of the site.

We will be responding in the appropriate way to the points of technical challenge, but in this short note we are keen to pick up on a couple of key issues that seem to present a misleading narrative.

The implication that this is a public amenity

Everything, from the descriptions of people wandering onto the site to study nature to the references to community value, give the impression this is an area of open public land being proposed for development. This is totally false. This is private land leased to a school. No one should be using it as a private park without permission of the school, which understandably has strict safeguarding rules under the requirements set out in s.175 of the Education Act 2002.

Furthermore, our proposals clearly state that the activities taking place on the site to which the public has historically been allowed access by the school - such as the annual firework display and cross country events - will continue as before. In fact, a successful application at Oakhurst actually strengthens the position of the school and will therefore safeguard its ability to offer access to the public when it so wishes or deems appropriate.

The suggestion that the site is being consented to be landbanked

The site is sustainable, policy compliant, in the Local Plan and in the urban area of Charlton Kings. Cheltenham has a significant shortfall of homes and in particular affordable homes. There is clear evidence that a significant number of housebuilders are anxious to purchase the site and start work immediately. They have a pressing need to build houses and this is a 'shovel ready' site for delivery now.

We are pleased to be able to set the matter straight in relation to these misleading comments and look forward to fully addressing the more technical issues that have been raised in due course.

Yours faithfully

Directors of William Morrison (Cheltenham Ltd)