

**Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council**  
**Cheltenham Local Plan Examination:**  
**Submission in response to the Inspector's Questions**

**Matter 3: Question 6 – Is there adequate justification for the siting of a school within the Leckhampton allocation (MD5)?**

Over the past decade shortages of secondary school places have forced some students to travel long distances to other schools. This particularly affects families living in Charlton Park between Leckhampton and Charlton Kings. Balcarras and Bournside schools both operate catchments. Originally these covered the whole area between the schools. But Balcarras has become very popular. Many parents move into Charlton Kings to secure places at Balcarras for their children, some moving temporarily and exploiting the sibling rule. Balcarras has recently discontinued its sibling rule, but nevertheless, according to GCC, the catchment radius of Balcarras is as little as 0.8-0.5 miles. Bournside and Balcarras have both expanded but major housing development in Up Hatherley has taken up extra Bournside capacity. So there is now a large gap between the catchments.

According to GCC, young families are moving into Leckhampton and Warden Hill, changing the demography. Also, some parents in north Cheltenham prefer to send their children to schools in south Cheltenham and this adds to demand for both primary and secondary places. To meet this, Leckhampton Primary School is being expanded from 420 pupils to 630 and Warden Hill Primary will probably expand likewise.

The need for a new secondary school in south Cheltenham was not raised in the JCS; it materialised only in December 2017. In the JCS public examination, GCC maintained that no extra secondary school was needed. Presumably GCC thought it could manage the shortfall through the planned new secondary school in north-west Cheltenham together with expansion of existing schools, and this might indeed still be the case. GCC had hoped to use its land on the Leckhampton Fields for housing and had given an option to developers. When housing was refused by Inspector Ord this created the opportunity to instead use the land to solve the secondary schooling shortfall.

There is still dispute over whether a new secondary school is essential in south Cheltenham and over the proposed location. The A46/Kidnappers Lane site is poorly accessible by car or bicycle from Charlton Park and is quite a long distance for walking. The Parish Council submitted a detailed analysis on this to GCC and to the Cheltenham Plan consultation in April 2018. This concluded that if many students come by car from the Charlton Park direction it could create severe cumulative traffic congestion on the A46 and in Church Road on a scale similar or worse than that identified by the Secretary of State in 2016 in refusing Bovis Homes and Miller Homes permission to build 650 new homes on the Leckhampton Fields.

The proposed secondary school was admitted into the Cheltenham Plan in December 2017 strictly on condition that the traffic situation was proved to be sustainable including allowing for the planned allocation of 250 new houses, and that the sustainability was demonstrated overtly using Paramics traffic modelling in conjunction with interested

parties including the Parish Council. At that time CBC was led to believe that the CBC Planning Committee would take the decision on sustainability. Subsequently GCC decided to handle the planning application through its own planning committee and there is concern that the application may be approved without adequate scrutiny of the traffic issues. GCC's traffic modelling and assessment seems at present to be covert.

A sensible alternative would be to expand Balcarras School to provide more local capacity. Balcarras is an academy and cannot be obliged to expand. It has already expanded and it thinks that to expand again would damage its culture and excellence. It also argues that it does not have the space to expand further. However, adjacent to Balcarras there is AONB land that is unsuitable for housing but could be used for extending the playing field, allowing part of the existing playing field to be used to expand the school. Balcarras currently has around 1400 places compared with 1800 at Bournside. Expanding Balcarras by 400 places could deal with most of the Charlton Park shortfall and could also benefit Balcarras financially. According to a letter from Dominic Burke, the Head Teacher, in the Gloucestershire Echo on 13 December, Balcarras is facing a potential financial deficit that could exhaust its reserves within three years. Expansion could provide economies of scale and the extra resources for the school to maintain its outstanding offering and its standing as one of the UK's most successful comprehensive schools. Significantly, Balcarras has been selected to manage the proposed new school at Leckhampton and this makes it much easier to consider rebalancing student numbers between Balcarras and Leckhampton.

## **REFERENCE LIST**

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REF [2] River Habitat Survey of Hatherley Brook and Moorend Stream, LEPUS Consulting Ltd. October 2017 [46 pp]. Available at:  
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[REF 6] Report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by P W Clark MA MRTPI MCMI. Inquiry held on 22 – 25 September and 29 September – 2 October 2015. Land at Kidnappers Lane Leckhampton, Cheltenham. File Ref: APP/B1605/W/14/3001717 11 January 2016 AND Secretary of State covering letter, Julian Pitt, APP/B1605/W/14/3001717, 5 May 2016.

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[http://www.leglag.org.uk/LEGLAG/News/Entries/2016/5/6\\_Good\\_News\\_\\_Outline\\_Planning\\_Application\\_for\\_650\\_Houses\\_in\\_Leckhampton\\_REJECTED.html](http://www.leglag.org.uk/LEGLAG/News/Entries/2016/5/6_Good_News__Outline_Planning_Application_for_650_Houses_in_Leckhampton_REJECTED.html)

[REF 7] Inspector's Preliminary Findings on Green Belt Release Spatial Strategy and Strategic Allocations - EXAM 146, 18th Dec. 2015. Available at: <http://www.gct-jcs.org/PublicConsultation/Gloucester,-Cheltenham-and-Tewkesbury-Joint-Core-Strategy-Examination-Document-Library.aspx>

[REF 8] Inspector's Interim Report – EXAM 232, 31st May 2016. Available at: <http://www.gct-jcs.org/PublicConsultation/Gloucester,-Cheltenham-and-Tewkesbury-Joint-Core-Strategy-Examination-Document-Library.aspx>

[REF 9] Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Revised Local Green Space Application - Dec 2015, EXAM 121A. Available at: <http://www.gct-jcs.org/PublicConsultation/Gloucester,-Cheltenham-and-Tewkesbury-Joint-Core-Strategy-Examination-Document-Library.aspx>

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## JOINT CORE STRATEGY CORE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

EXAM 121 LHWHP C Priorities for the Leckhampton fields green space  
EXAM 121A Community LGS common ground requested by the Inspector  
ENAT 101 Habitats regulations assessment – screenings report (Dec 2011)  
ENAT 106 Ecological Survey Work (Cheltenham 2010, 2011, 2012, Gloucester 2006, 2010; Tewkesbury 2009, 2010, 2011)  
ENAT 107 Joint Core Strategy Historic Environment Assessment (Mar 2014)  
ENAT 108 Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014)  
EXAM 108A Natural England greenspace guidance June 2010