

Bohunt School 6 th form

Conservative Councillors write about the failure to provide the 6th form at Bohunt on time

Bohunt Sixth form expansion delayed again...

In March 2022 following a long public campaign by residents of Finchampstead Wokingham Borough Council reached a deal with the Bohunt Trust to expand the educational provision at Bohunt School. Two petitions were raised by local residents with well over 1400 signatures and the campaign was supported by local conservative cllrs as well as the local MP James Sunderland. This agreement was that WBC and Bohunt would fund the provision of a brand new 6th form facility, additional year 7 places and send provision. This new facility was scheduled to open in September 2023 giving much needed provision for an additional 200 – 300 pupils

In May 2022 following the local elections the Liberal Democrats took control of Wokingham Council. In public they were keen to reassure residents they still planned to proceed with expansion at Bohunt however the lack of any meaningful progress on the ground made it clear that all was not well. Costs had risen on the building programme and the crucial stumbling block was Wokingham Borough Council insisting on a new scope and refusing to part fund its share. 14 months after the Liberals took control of the council there is still no agreement on funding and without movement from Wokingham Borough Council no chance of this moving forwards

We have been advised that even if funding was agreed today there is little chance of a new building being ready by September 2024 due to logistical issues of construction and hiring the relevant staff. The council have now formally admitted the sixth form will not open (as they promised at the may 2023 local elections) in September 2023. It is now time for them to be honest and commit publicly to fund this expansion rather than the endless misleading statements about commitment with no funding

We are very dissapointed that WBC continues to fail to honour the promises it gave to the Finchampstead and Aborfield community in March 2022. It is wrong that children from across the south of the borough face long journeys out of borough at Farnborough or to the north of wokingham for 6th form provision because there is no facility nearby. It is wrong that WBC is building 2 new send schools on green fields at Rooks Nest when alternative provision could have been provided earlier and at less cost to the taxpayer at Bohunt. It is wrong that WBC is walking away from additional year 7 provision at Bohunt meaning children from Finchampstead face long journeys across wokingham every day because the capacity at bohunt is full. The catchment area at bohunt gets smaller year by year. Bohunt is a successful and well loved school. WBC should be supporting and developing successful schools in the borough. Children in the south of the borough are being treated like second class citizens and this is not acceptable. The south is forced to take all the housing but gets no infrastructure – this is wrong

We remain fully committed to seeing the 6th form, extra year 7 and send provision at Bohunt and will continue to campaign for this important facility to be provided

Cllr Charles Margetts, Cllr Rebecca Margetts, Cllr Peter Harper and George Evans former Conservative candidate for Barkham |)

[My Interventions in the Draft Postal Packets \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2023 \(2\)](#)

The form of this statutory instrument is to amend regulations relating to foreign postal packets. It includes GB-NI postal packets alongside foreign postal packets in important matters in the regulations specified. How can the Government defend that? They are effectively treating Northern Ireland and GB as foreign countries to each other, accepting a form of regulation designed for a true international border and clearly violating the terms of the internal market legislation governing the United Kingdom? *[Interruption.]*

Victoria Atkins, Financial Secretary to the Treasury

If I may, I will address that point, and then I promise I will come to the hon. Member for North Antrim in due course. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham used that language, so that I can make it clear for the purposes of *Hansard* that this is not about trying to differentiate or draw lines around our precious Union.

[My Interventions in the Draft Postal Packets \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2023 \(3\)](#)

John Redwood:

I thought that, in law, and certainly politically, the Good Friday agreement took precedence over other agreements, given its importance. How is this measure in any way compatible with the Good Friday agreement when it does not have the consent of the Unionist community—an important underlying principle of the whole agreement? I would also like to assure the Minister that I do not use the phrase “hard compromise”, and I have not been recommending these kinds of proposals.

Victoria Atkins, Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

I am sorry; I did not catch my right hon. Friend's last point. Would he repeat it?

I thought the Minister implied earlier that I thought that this was a hard compromise. I do not; I think it is bad policy.

Victoria Atkins, Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

I think my right hon. Friend misheard me. I was referring to the Northern Ireland Minister, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). I would not dream of putting words in the mouth of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham.

A point was made about the Road Haulage Association. The answer to that intervention is that the powers were available to Border Force in respect of international movements. We understand the sensitivities and the concerns raised about making powers available for GB to NI movements, but we would say that that is not the same as making these international movements.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham asked a very important question about the Good Friday agreement. We do not accept that this is contrary to the Good Friday agreement. These regulations are in fact an enabler to the agreement that we have negotiated. As I said, we have ensured that consumer interests in Northern Ireland and the interests of British businesses selling to Northern Ireland are protected, but that means that an incentive now exists to move goods into Northern Ireland and take them across the Irish border to avoid EU tariffs. If we are to manage that risk—*[Interruption.]*

[My Interventions in the Draft Postal Packets \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2023 \(4\)](#)

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there has already been diversion of trade away from GB into Northern Ireland, and is he worried that the draft regulations will create a lot more diversion of trade away from GB?

The right hon. Gentleman is quite right: that is the problem. In the absence of detailed knowledge about what the new arrangements will be, businesses will simply turn their back on Northern Ireland. I spoke to a constituent today who wanted to buy a mattress from Argos. Although Argos clearly brings goods into Northern Ireland, that was obviously inconvenient for it and it simply said, "We don't sell mattresses to Northern Ireland any longer." That is exactly what is happening. Even if the Minister is correct, the threat that there will be different arrangements for taking goods and postal packages into Northern Ireland will discourage businesses from entering into those kinds of arrangements. We are already seeing the diversion of trade.

The Government's argument is that the draft regulations improve the

situation, but actually, they do not. If we had stopped even with the provisions of the protocol, the grace periods would have prevented this from happening. It does not happen at present. If the Government really want there to be no interference, why not stick with the grace periods? Why not make it clear that the regulations are not needed? There has been no leakage during the grace periods, and there is no evidence that hazardous goods and so on are moving into the EU. Why did the Government not take that stance? Why are the Government still not taking that stance? There would then be no need for the regulations.

More money for local schools

The government has today published the figures for increased money for schools in 2024-5 by constituency under the National Funding Formula. The local Education Authority decides the final allocations by school.

Wokingham sees an increase of 7.2%, one of the larger increases, to a total of £107 m for its schools. Wokingham can afford more than the £4655 minimum for each primary pupil and £6050 for secondary pupils laid down by the government with money for 5% above these figures.

There will also be extra payments to cover additional costs of teachers pay awards on top of this grant.