

Stafford L. Smith  
Bainbridge Island Hearing Examiner  
280 Madison Avenue North  
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Re: Madrona School Conditional Use Permit Transportation Matters

Dear Examiner Smith:

I am writing to object strongly to the location of a large school facility in the Windsong Loop neighborhood. Even extraordinary mitigation measures, which have not been offered up to this point, could not make such a use harmonious with the low density, residential neighborhood that currently exists.

Traffic issues have been analyzed, discussed and dismissed by the applicant and City staff up to this point. The traffic study extrapolates a 37 second wait for southbound Madison Avenue cars entering SR 305 during the peak morning hour with the school added. Yet the study fails to identify the 3-light cycle, 7.5 minute wait islanders currently experience and have documented at this intersection while heading to the 8:45 ferry. The analysis of traffic impacts is heavily flawed as are any conclusions drawn from it.

While Madison Avenue is a secondary arterial, it also serves as the main route for almost all southbound traffic from the northeast quadrant of the island during the morning commute. While 20 mile per hour speed limits are good for school children, an accounting has not been made on the impacts this slowdown would have on commuters southbound on Madison heading to the ferry, to public schools or to jobs in the Winslow area.

The adjacency of the proposed new school entrance to an existing public school bus shelter, Kitsap Transit 94 pickup point and sole entrance to Windsong Loop is dismissed because the last school bus picks up minutes before the Madrona peak begins and the 94 also does not run during the Madrona peak period – today. Public schools all over the state are continuing to modify start times, usually later based on student performance studies. Neither the City nor Madrona can guarantee Bainbridge Schools will not schedule a bus pickup 20 minutes later than now, next year or five years from now. Also, neither party can guarantee Kitsap Transit will not add a bus run serving the 8:45 ferry as the public parking lots reach overflow and that ferry becomes another heavily used commute run. Buses stopping in the street for passengers, mixed with inbound Madrona traffic from both directions, creates a hazardous condition for the pedestrians. Finally, even if backups on the street can be prevented through “parent education” and traffic management by teachers, school traffic, especially the southbound left-turners overlain on the existing, heavy, ferry bound traffic load, will block anyone attempting to leave Windsong Loop heading north. The City design standard for separating vehicle entryways must be respected, not dismissed. That may mean the school traffic flow must be redesigned and if that cannot happen on their small parcel, then the proposal is not harmonious with the neighborhood.

The school suggests requiring exiting school traffic to turn north to reduce the congestion at the bus stop and SR 305 and that requirement should not be left to teacher oversight and bulletins to the parents. The parking lot exit should be angled north, like a merge lane to North Madison, to force cars north. The school should also fund a centerline concrete barrier on Madison, as exists at Madison/SR 305 and the nearby Safeway parking entrances, to ensure exiting cars turn north. It should be noted

that the north turn requirement will also reduce the light pollution from headlights that would otherwise flash across windows and tree limbs across the street during winter mornings and evening events. The school's projection of events happening at the school two weeknights a week until 10 PM further exacerbates the light and noise impacts that will need to be mitigated in order to be harmonious with the neighborhood. Five homes across the street would be impacted by the flashes of light from the headlights.

Constructing an auditorium on the site for all-school events and proposing to rent it to outside groups creates another class of traffic and parking issues. Madrona proposes to rely on parent education and staff management of rental events to control parking. Yet without enforceable "no parking" signage, the small parking areas on the proposed site will force parking onto Madison Avenue and within Windsong Loop. The streets in the Loop are barely two lane with grass shoulders. Parking on even one side of these streets would cause access issues for emergency vehicles. Parking on either side of Madison would create high hazard situations, especially on the improved bike path. The school should fund whatever signage is necessary to ensure an enforceable prohibition of parking on Madison and within Windsong Loop for any events on school grounds.

Noise from the school, whether it be children on the playground, increased traffic or events at the assembly hall, will be difficult to mitigate in a harmonious manner for the neighborhood. Madrona has offered to increase the vegetated buffer on the south side of the property, where the playground and assembly hall are closest to neighboring residences. They have also offered to construct a six foot, acoustic barrier fence on the school side of the vegetation buffer. This may be the most that can reasonably be done to prevent noise impacts to neighboring properties to the south, but there is no assurance this strategy will be effective. Special concern still remains for any use of the assembly hall that involves amplified music or voice or even unamplified music performances by voice or instruments.

Potential traffic, parking and noise impacts from the assembly hall suggest the hall, if permitted at all, should be restricted to school uses only. The facility should not be rented or "bartered" to other groups or organizations in order to limit the adverse impacts on the neighborhood. Because the assembly hall is to be constructed in a third phase, it would be conservatively wise for the city to only permit construction of the first two phases to better understand the traffic, parking, light and noise impacts from the classroom phases of construction. With that knowledge, the City could better identify mitigating measures or determine whether this parcel is an appropriate place at all for an assembly hall.

Thank you for your review and consideration of these concerns.

Bill Eckel  
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