

Matthew Phillips

From: David Sagstad <david.sagstad@devplanning.co.uk>
Sent: 25 November 2021 14:33
To: Claudia Currie
Cc: Matthew Phillips; Jennifer Wagstaff; Nick Bateman
Subject: Nine Acres School - Residual Highways Queries, Formal Response
Attachments: Report-2004600WR1011.pdf; DPL SK011.pdf; DPL SK012.pdf

Claudia,

I hope that you are well. Following our pre-application and application-related discussions, I provide additional information as discussed.

It is noting that a highway objection has been received from the Nine Acres Field Campaign Group (dated 6th August 2021). I understand that each of the issues raised have been considered in detail and the following two issues are those which require additional information:

- Westminster Drive/ Park Avenue Junction; and
- Coach operation.

WESTMINSTER DRIVE/ PARK AVENUE

Forecast Vehicle Flows

The objector has raised concern regarding the potential utilisation of this junction by development-generated traffic.

The first issue relates to the potential volume of traffic which may utilise the junction. Whilst it is not possible to quantify this exactly, it is reasonable to consider the street pattern and layout of Wrexham to consider the potential usage.

The key routes towards the site are Chester Road and Rhosnesni Lane, via which the majority of traffic could be expected to travel. Park Avenue does provide a relatively direct route from the south eastern areas of Wrexham and some central areas (east of the centre), therefore there would be some desire for parents to use this route during school pick-up/ drop-off.

As all staff traffic would utilise Rhosnesni Lane (the car park access for staff is on to Rhosnesni Lane) then no staff are expected to use the junction.

If we were to take the forecast development-generated traffic of 100 inbound and 100 outbound vehicles relating to parents, then a high-end estimate of the usage of Westminster Drive/ Park Avenue could be around ¼ of that traffic, around 25 inbound and 25 outbound vehicles. This is based upon the car parking operating as two separate car parks or a single car park with two accesses.

If the car parking is to be inbound via Westminster Drive and outbound via Rhosnesni Lane, then a high end estimate could be for ½ the traffic to potentially utilise Westminster Drive/ Park Avenue. This equates to around 50 inbound movements and no outbound movements for both drop-off and pick-up.

In the latter case there would be no additional vehicles exiting Westminster Drive/ Park Avenue (as they would all be turning in) and no assessment of the visibility splay would be required. Whilst it wouldn't be a direct route, it is accepted that a very small number of cars relating to the school may utilise the junction, however these would not be following a desire line and is likely to be offset by the reduced commuter vehicles using and parking on Westminster Drive.

In both situations, the forecast development-generated traffic at the junction is relatively low (less than 1 car per minute at peak traffic flows times) and would not materially alter the general usage or composition of traffic at the junction.

Existing Safety Record

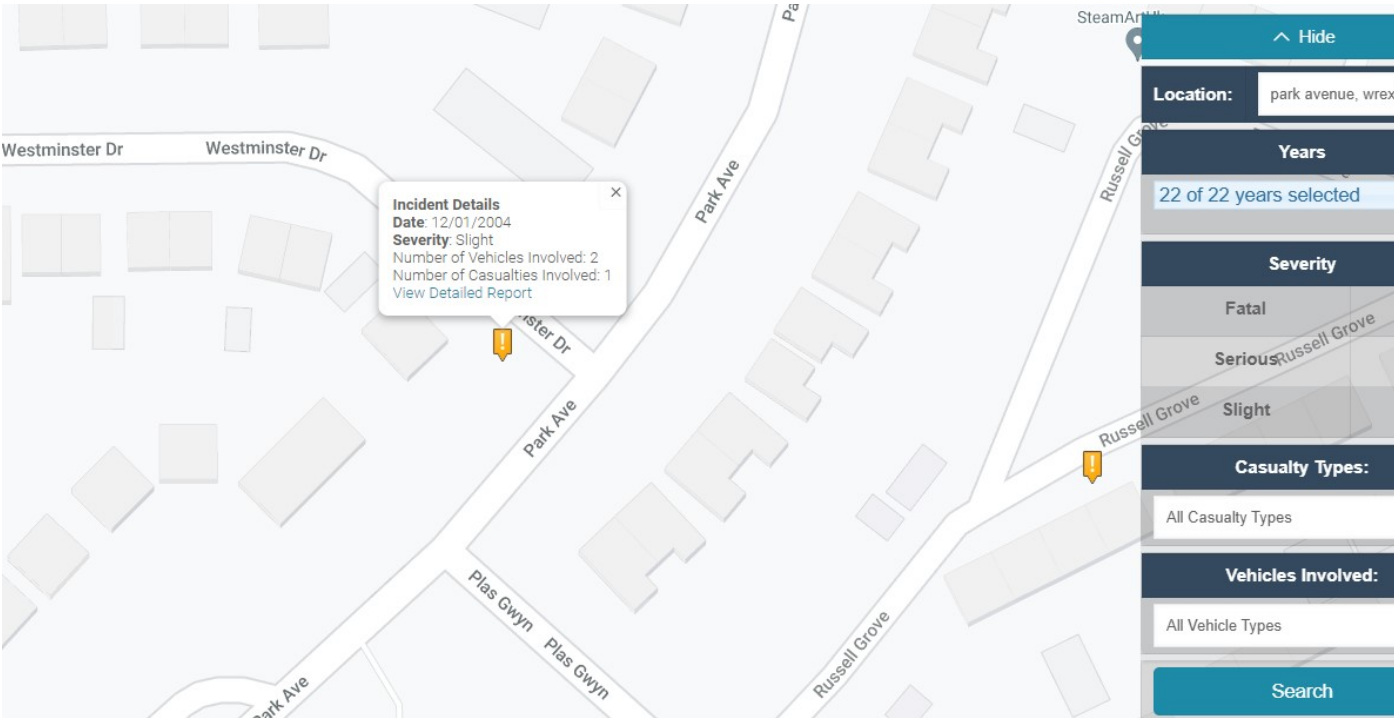
For the situation where the junction is utilised, it is important to firstly consider the accident records at the junction. We have utilised the national Crashmap database for this and summarise the findings below.

By way of background, in the last 22 year’s of data for the junction, there has been one recorded slight accident. That occurred in 2004, with no other accidents in the 17 years since then. That is to say that despite the trees, every single vehicle that has used the junction in 17 years has done so without a reportable accident, i.e. over 6,000 consecutive days with no accidents at all recorded.

For the only accident that did occur I attach the accident report. The report states that the accident was slight and occurred between two cars, both turning left. The driver of the first car appears to be significantly under age and, therefore, would not have had a licence – the driver was in the band 11 to 15. The other driver was in the age band 16 to 20, so may/ may not have been of legal age. In either event, at least one driver did not have a licence. The accident is not one that appears to relate to the trees, rather the experience/ legal status of the driver.

The typical search period for accidents is 3 years, or at most 5 years. This review is considerably more robust than that.

There is no material accident history at the junction:



Visibility Measurements

A site visit has been undertaken by a council officer to measure the location of the trees at the junction and these have been plotted on OS mapping. Attached are DPL SK011 and DPL SK012.

Typically, visibility plays are measured 2.4m back from the give-way line. This is the distance utilised in DPL SK011. DPL SK011 shows the various visibility plays from Manual for Street for 20mph, 25mph and 30mph to the left and to the right. To the left, the visibility plays have been shown to the nearside kerb and to an approaching vehicle.

Photographs from the driver’s seat of a stationary car at the give-way line have been shown on the plan.

DPL SK011 Shows that the location of the trees does have some impact on visibility splay measurements, however there are gaps between the trees which allow visibility to be achieved at or about all of the 20mph, 25mph and 30mph splays to the right.

To the left, the tree does intersect some of the intervening visibility splays, however the 30mph to the nearside kerb 9 (as well as the 20mph and 25mph to an approaching car) should be achievable.

These splays are measured in line with the standards and the 2.4m setback distance from the give-way. In reality, a driver would choose the location which gave their required visibility, whether it be slightly further back or forwards of the 2.4m (which itself is a guide).

The photographs help to show this in perspective, where the visibility has some restriction, however clear views are achievable.

DPL SK012 shows the visibility from an approaching car towards a car at the give-way line. I have shown the nearside vehicles as orange and an offside vehicle as red (to the left) for the case of a car overtaking a parked car. The measurements are taken at 43m from the give-way, i.e. 30mph visibility. It can be seen that whilst the view of a small portion of the car is obstructed by the tree, the majority of the car is visible. It is reasonable to expect the driver on the main road to be paying attention and that they would drive appropriately, knowing that there is a car at the give-way line.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the information in detail, including historic accident records and on-site measurements, it is concluded that there are suitable visibility splays available when measured on-site and observed in the real world. It is acknowledged that there is some restriction to visibility caused by the existing trees adjacent to the junction, when measured from strictly 2.4m back, however these do not appear to impede visibility so as to make the junction unsafe (no legal driver has had a reportable accident at the junction in the 22 year accident review).

There is a potential mitigation which would help to improve visibility, which would be to remove the trees immediately adjacent to the junction. Our conclusion is that this measure is not required in order to deliver the school safely, however the mitigation remains available should it be required.

There appear to be no reasonable highway reasons for refusal of the application on the basis of the visibility splay at the junction without considering mitigation. Should mitigation be requested then this is feasible, however the removal of street trees would not be preferred and their removal would need to be considered in the planning balance, set against the benefits of the scheme overall.

COACHES

The current design of the coach access/ egress seeks to balance the bus usage, with pedestrian crossing widths. The balance being sought is the 6x33 seat plus 1x33 seat coaches (via what is arguably a low usage access) vs the much higher number of pedestrians utilising the footway who benefit from the crossing width being narrower.

The scheme has been submitted to, and agreed, by the council officers responsible for public transport and road safety. This involved email and phone correspondence, as well as a meeting during the pre-application period.

It is fully accepted that there are a range of answers to the design balance here, which we sought appropriate officer's input to. Should a change be required to the radii of the access/ egress routes then this can be discussed and accommodated without material change to the scheme itself.

With regard to the bus timings, these are not something that is set in stone as the routes and/ or operator could change in the future. As such, we have assumed that all seven coaches arrive at roughly the same time and depart at a similar time. For the school departure, we were previously informed that coaches planned to leave at 15:25pm (i.e. that the pupils knew they had to be on the coach by then).

It is expected that the management of the coach area would result in coaches being let out in a manged fashion and that coaches would not leave if there is a flow of children from another coach.

On a minor point, there appears to be a misinterpretation relating to the architect's layout. The architect has shown arrows to highlight the entrance points to the site and these may have been misinterpreted to be white line islands. This is not the case and the lining would be standard give-way lines.

Conclusion

The proposed coach access/ egress has been considered from pre-application stage, including discussions and agreement from the public transport officer and road safety officer. The proposals are considered to provide a balance between pedestrian crossing widths and carriageway space. It is acknowledged that there are alternative options for the access radii, however these would not materially impact on the layout of the scheme.

There is considered to be no reasonable highway reason for refusal of the application on the basis for the coach access/ egress. An alternative design could be agreed, however the changes would not materially alter the overall scheme.

OTHER MATTERS

We are aware of a number of matters of detail raised by the objector. I confirm that we have reviewed each of these and that the comments appear to generally fall in to two categories:

- Queries relating to the accuracy/ application of the data; and
- Active travel issues.

QUERIES RELATING TO DATA

At the time of the drafting of the application documents, the country was in lockdown. Even so, best endeavours were taken to provide a reasonable and robust assessment of trip generation by all modes of transport. Some of the data preceded lockdown, including the mode share data.

The assessments which have been undertaken are considered to be reasonable and robust and result in no material highway issues being highlighted. In particular, there appear to be no borderline issues which a small change to the assumptions could affect. Whilst there are alternative ways of interpreting the data, none of those put forwards by the objector appear to make such a significant difference to the assessments, whether considered in isolation or cumulatively. This is notwithstanding some of the objector's interpretations of the data being incorrect.

It is understood that the highway authority have considered the submitted data and consider that it is appropriate for determining the application.

ACTIVE TRAVEL ISSUES

Active travel consideration has been at the heart of this scheme, which can be seen from the proposals for widening of footways, commodious routes for pedestrians within the site and consideration of offsite mitigation measures.

The application is also accompanied by a Travel Plan, which the school have considered and agreed.

Active travel is and remains high on the national agenda, including the release of the Active Travel Act Guidance (July 2021). That guidance aligns with other national policies, which have been considered within the assessments and, as such, whilst specific mention is not made to the guidance (released after the report was written), the guidance does not materially alter the way in which the application should have been approached.

The scheme development incorporated active travel, with pedestrian routing taking precedence over vehicle routing for the internal design ethos, and the scheme is considered suitable for encouraging sustainable travel.

FINAL COMMENT

Should you have any further comments or queries, we will happily review and discuss these, including providing additional information where required.

Regards

Dave

David Sagstad
Development Planning Limited
Office : 01924 684000
Mobile : 07473 751305

A CARBON NEUTRAL COMPANY

FOR THE PLANET AND FOR THE FUTURE

This email has been scanned by BullGuard antivirus protection.
For more info visit www.bullguard.com