

Our Reference: P19014/DS
Your Reference:



2 March 2020

Ms Mared Rees-Jones
Planning Department
Wrexham County Borough Council
Council Offices
16 Lord Street
Wrexham
LL11 1LG

Dear Mared,

RE: Application ET/DC/2019/0877 – Response to Comments from Highways Officers

Further to the response from Mr Peter Douthwaite dated 21st February 2020 in relation to the above, please find below our comments on the issues raised. You should note that these latest comments are very similar to previous comments from highways which we received at the beginning of February but were dated 16th December 2019. We did issue a Technical Note dated 14th February 2020 which provided a detailed response to the issues raised in the December 2019 response, however the content of this Technical Note seems to have been largely ignored in the evolution of these latest comments.

For clarity, the issues raised in Mr Peter Douthwaite's response are highlighted in red italics below, with our response in black standard font.

1. Site Access

I would recommend that the applicant provides a suitably scaled layout plan indicating an appropriate scheme for a right turning lane / ghost island along Oak Road.

Firstly, it should be noted that Mr Douthwaite does not provide any detailed technical assessment to back up the above statement as to why a ghost island right turn facility is required at this site access.

As highlighted in our Technical Note dated 14th February 2020, Section 4.2 of the Transport Assessment summarises, given that standard priority controlled junctions are the predominant form of junction within WIE, there is a low volume of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development (circa 3 additional vehicles per minute in the peak periods), and the volume of existing traffic on Oak Road is substantially less than the requirements in DMRB CD123, the TA concludes that a standard priority controlled junction depicted in **Drawing P19014-001E** is the most appropriate form of access to this proposed development. Given the above, we would suggest that the provision of a ghost island right turn, and the additional costs associated to its construction, are unwarranted and a costly addition to the development.

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2. Pedestrian Island on the Site Access

I would recommend the provision of a suitable pedestrian crossing I splitter island across the proposed access. The proposed crossing indicated on submitted layout plan (Drg. No. P19014-003B) is not considered suitable. This feature is simply a dropped kerb crossing with no pedestrian refuge.

Again, Mr Douthwaite does not provide any technical assessment as to why the proposed crossing shown in Drawing No P19014-003B is not considered suitable.

As highlighted in our response dated 14th February 2020, we believe that a given the relatively low levels of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development and the low levels of pedestrian activity in the vicinity of the site, that a pedestrian crossing comprising dropped kerbs and tactile paving is the appropriate solution to incorporate into the design of the proposed site access. Provision of a splitter island would require the mouth of the junction to be widened to accommodate the island and vehicle swept paths, resulting in a greater crossing distance for pedestrians, which would be counterintuitive. Such islands are typically only required on busy roads that are difficult for pedestrians to cross in a single movement, the comparatively lightly trafficked nature of the site access would not be such a road.

3. Dropped Crossings on Oak Road

Appropriate dropped kerb crossing points will need to be provided further along Oak Road in order to provide safe pedestrian access to the existing bus stop I shelter on the opposite side of the road.

As highlighted in our Technical Note dated the 14th February 2020, the applicant is happy to provide tactile dropped kerbs to aid pedestrian movements to local bus stops. Prime would like to highlight **Paragraph 4.5.3** of the TA, with the Road Safety Audit (RSA) highlighting that dropped kerbs in close proximity to the nearest bus stop could have visibility obstructed by a waiting bus. Although this bus stop is currently unused, in the interests of future proofing the safety of pedestrians, the proposed dropped kerbs were moved further west to maximise pedestrian visibility. As also mentioned in the above mentioned Technical Note, Prime is happy to engage further with the highways officers for them to highlight specifically where they would want a drop kerb crossing provided.

4. Safety Audits

Any proposed new access in this location will require Stage 1, 2 & 3 Safety Audits. I would recommend that Stage 1 & 2 Safety Audits are submitted as part of any planning application to ensure a safe and satisfactory access can be provided.

Safety Audits are conducted in accordance with GG119 (formerly HD19/15) of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Volume 5 Section 2.

As highlighted in GG119, Road Safety Audits go through four key phases as follows:-

- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit
 - o Completion of preliminary design, normally prior to the submission for planning permission
- Stage 2 Road Safety Audit
 - o Completion of detailed design, usually before the tender documents have been submitted
- Stage 3 Road Safety Audit
 - o Completion of construction prior to opening (or completion if on a 'live' highway)
- Stage 4 Road Safety Audit
 - o Post opening monitoring (12 months after opening of the highway scheme).

As highlighted in the Technical Note of the 14th February, a Stage 1 RSA has been completed for this proposed development. According to GG119, this is the appropriate level of audit required at this stage of the planning process. This audit together with a Designer's Response has been included within the TA. It should be noted that a Stage 2 RSA will be undertaken as part of the s278 process, according to GG119, this being the appropriate time for such an audit to be undertaken.

A Stage 2 Safety Audit would indicate at the planning stage whether it is feasible to provide a ghost island arrangement in this location.

As defined in GG119, a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit is undertaken on completion of the detailed design process, usually before tender documents have been submitted. This stage of the Road Safety Audit is not to identify if a particular form of junction is feasible. The above statement from Mr Douthwaite would appear to be at odds with what the Safety Audit process is all about.

5. Footpath Links

I understand that it is proposed to provide footpath links from the development site to Oak Road and to the existing public footpath (PROW No. 19- Abenbury). I would strongly recommend that you liaise with our Public Rights of Way Section on this matter- contact: Sean Hanratty on Tel:01978 729761. Any proposed footpath links will need to be provided on a suitable layout plan

As highlighted in the Technical Note dated 14th February 2020, through correspondence with Sean Hanratty, it was highlighted to Prime that a short section of the potential connection to Footpath19 fell within 3rd party control. As such, any connection to Footpath 19 has been stated within the TA as potential, to be finalised or agreed following any reserved matters application.

6. Emergency Access/Cycleway Links

...I would recommend that the applicant seeks advice from the Fire Brigade on any requirements for an emergency access.

The need for an emergency access/cycle connection has been discussed on a number of occasions. Following comments with regard to heritage issues, the area of the site and hence the volume of development proposed for the site has reduced. The reduction of the proposed site area has resulted in there being only one part of the site that now has a frontage to the highway network, this being the point of the main site access. Given this lack of site frontage to the highway a separate emergency access is now difficult to deliver without the need for 3rd party land. The Technical Note dated 14th February 2020 questioned the need for a separate emergency access. Given Mr Douthwaite's comments the applicant is attempting to contact the emergency services to ascertain if an emergency access is required for this site.

7. Layout

Mr Douthwaite has a number of comments relating to the internal layout of the scheme, its suitability for adoption, the number of parking spaces and turning provision.

As highlighted in the Technical Note dated 14th February 2020, the application is for outline planning, with the matter mentioned by Mr Douthwaite being dealt with as part of any reserved matters application.

8. Public Transport Provision

Current public transport provision serving the industrial estate is poor. I would strongly recommend that you discuss the proposed development including potential funding for an improved bus service with our Public Transport Officer- Andrew Mytton on Tel: 01978 729760.

Our Public Transport Section have responded as follows:

The £25,000 per annum requested for the development at oak Road would fund a contribution to peak time only (am/pm) additional bus journeys (Mon – Fri) to this point in the Industrial Estate.

This may take the form of negotiation with the incumbent bus operator currently providing an hourly service to the central parts of Wrexham Industrial Estate, but deemed to be of excessive walking distance from the current route serves. There is existing infrastructure within close proximity of the proposed site, that has previously seen a bus serve this part of the industrial estate, prior to the bus company ceasing trading.

As highlighted in Section 7 of the Transport Assessment and reiterated in the Technical Note dated 14th February 2020, in accordance to the Welsh Office document, Circular 13/97 Annex B, such contributions ‘*should only be sought where they are necessary to make a proposal acceptable*’ and are ‘*fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and reasonable in all other respects*’.

It is noted that bus service no.1E which served WIE, previously operated by Price Coaches, was withdrawn from service in early 2019, with bus service no.42, previously operated by Easy Coach, being withdrawn from service after 75 days of operation in September 2018. The service was withdrawn based on its commercial viability. In accordance to Circular 13/97, paragraph B12, it is stated that ‘*developers should not be expected to pay for facilities which are needed solely in order to resolve existing deficiencies nor should attempts be made to extract excessive contributions to infrastructure costs from developers*’.

6 Circular 13/97, paragraph B12, continues to state that it could be acceptable ‘*for an obligation to be sought where it would overcome an existing constraint which is materially exacerbated by the proposal*’. The development proposals for WIE are felt to not face any constraints as a result of the current existing bus service provision. The current 41a service arrives within the estate from approximately 06:00 with the last service departing the estate at circa 18:20, with an hourly frequency Monday to Saturday. Service 41b started within WIE April 2019, funded via HMP Berwyn, operates an hourly Sunday frequency. Combined, both routes together provide a viable option for commuters to the industrial estate 7 days a week, with the development site being within an approximate 10-minute walk of a bus stop.

Circular 13/97, paragraph B15, advises ‘*to guard against attempting to secure a list or range of desirable benefits from developers, even if they consider such benefits to be related in some way to the proposed development*’. The paragraph further states that attempts to secure additional benefits may be counterproductive. This being that seeking ‘*more than is justified*’ may ‘*frustrate worthwhile development proposals*’.

Given the above, and the recent loss of services within WIE, it is not deemed necessary for such public transport funding to be sought. Current provision within WIE will likely accommodate the additional patronage to WIE associated with the development.

The use of other sustainable modes of transport are also liable to increase with the appointment of a future Travel Plan Coordinator. This is supported through Planning Policy Wales 10 (PPW10) paragraph 4.1.1, with the text stating support for sustainable developments which ‘*increases physical activity, improves health and helps to tackle the causes of climate change and airborne pollution*’. PPW10 emphasises the need for promotion of ‘*employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas*’, particularly in areas ‘*which are, or can be, easily reached by walking or cycling*’.

It has been proven with Section 5 (of the Transport Assessment) that the site can be cycled to within a recognised reasonable distance, with approximately half of Wrexham falling within a 5000m cycling range.

Figure 8 of PPW10 is noted as listing walking and cycling above public transport within a sustainable transport hierarchy, with the recent provision of a walking/cycling route along Bridge Road South adhering to this. Paragraph 4.1.16 states that *'Different approaches to sustainable transport will be required in different parts of Wales'*, with development needing to reflect local circumstances. It continues by stating that some areas, *'despite it having limited public transport accessibility, could apply the transport hierarchy by: first considering how the location and design of new development could encourage walking and cycling'*. The development site supports walking and cycling.

9. Surface Water Drainage.

This is an Outline planning application and this issue would be tackled at detailed / reserved matters stage; a condition requesting such detail could be applied.

10. Street Lighting

This is an Outline planning application and this issue would be tackled at detailed / reserved matters stage; a condition requesting such detail could be applied.

11. Service and Delivery Management Plan

The applicant is willing to have a condition attached to the planning approval regarding the production of such a document.

12 Construction Traffic Management Plan

The applicant is willing to have a condition attached to the planning approval regarding the production of such a document.

SUMMARY

We understand that Mr Douthwaite has now left the Highway Authority and that this case has now been passed to Mr Phil Palmer (who we recall happened to be in an early pre-app meeting where Highway matters were discussed). It would be helpful to learn whether Mr Palmer wishes to stand by the comments made by Douthwaite or whether he may wish to take the opportunity to review our Technical Note afresh. We would be happy to speak / meet with him direct as this ultimately may provide you, as planning case officer, with greater comfort and a more credible and valid input than has been regurgitated by Mr Douthwaite's note of 21st February.

Alternatively, you may consider that our position is acceptable and robust without asking Mr Palmer to respond.

Either way I would be grateful if you could confirm your approach and should you need any further points of clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.



Yours sincerely,

D. Schumacher

DAVID SCHUMACHER
DIRECTOR

Cc **Phil Palmer, WCBC Highways**
 Justin Paul, J10 Planning