Your Ref: DC/19/0834/RM
Date: 29th May 2019
Highways Enquiries to: luke.barber@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk County Council

All planning enquiries should be sent to the Local Planning Authority.
Email: planning.help@westsuffolk.gov.uk

The Planning Officer
St Edmundsbury Borough Council
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

For the Attention of: Penelope Mills

Dear Penelope

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - CONSULTATION RETURN DC/19/0834/RM

Haverhill: strategic allocation to the north-east, Great Wilsey Park – reserved matters application

I refer to the proposal: reserved matters application – submission of details under outline planning permission DC/15/2151/OUT (residential development of up to 2,500 units (within use classes C2/C3); two primary schools; two local centres including retail, community and employment use (with use classes A1/A2/A3/A4/A5, B1 and D1/D2; open space; landscaping and associated infrastructure).

Submission of details for the reserved matters access, landscaping, layout and scale for the spine road and associated strategic infrastructure to support the delivery of the first phase of development at Great Wilsey Park.

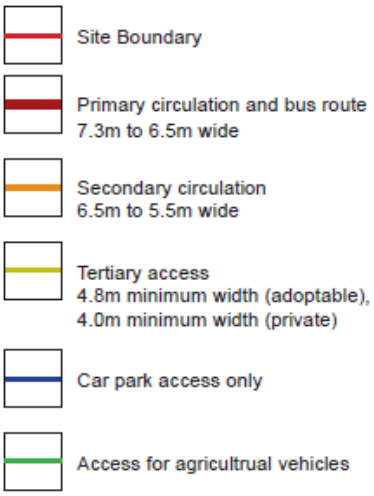
Planning permission was granted by way of the Decision Notice dated 15 August 2018 which imposed planning conditions. In addition, a section 106 planning obligation was completed on 13 August 2018.

The recently consulted Reserved Matters package comprising the strategic highways infrastructure for the site varies in several key details from the approved Parameter Plans listed in the Decision Notice for outline planning permission DC/15/2151/OUT. These differences, and any material highways implications are set out below.

As a general point it is very difficult to confirm the exact location and number of access points from the Spine Road into the development parcels without further details. We wouldn't want to unduly restrict the layout of the parcels by rigidly setting parcel access matters at this stage, in isolation from the parcel layouts.

On the Strategic Road network drawing, PB8301-RHD-DE-H1-DR-D-0150 revision I04, the northern road through Parcel A2 (road sections reference B1 and B2) are shown as secondary route, at 5.5m wide. This is contrary to the FPRC Access Parameter Plan (Ref: 5055-ES-04 Rev. F) which indicated that this loop would all be primary street, at up to 7.3 metres wide. See below extract:

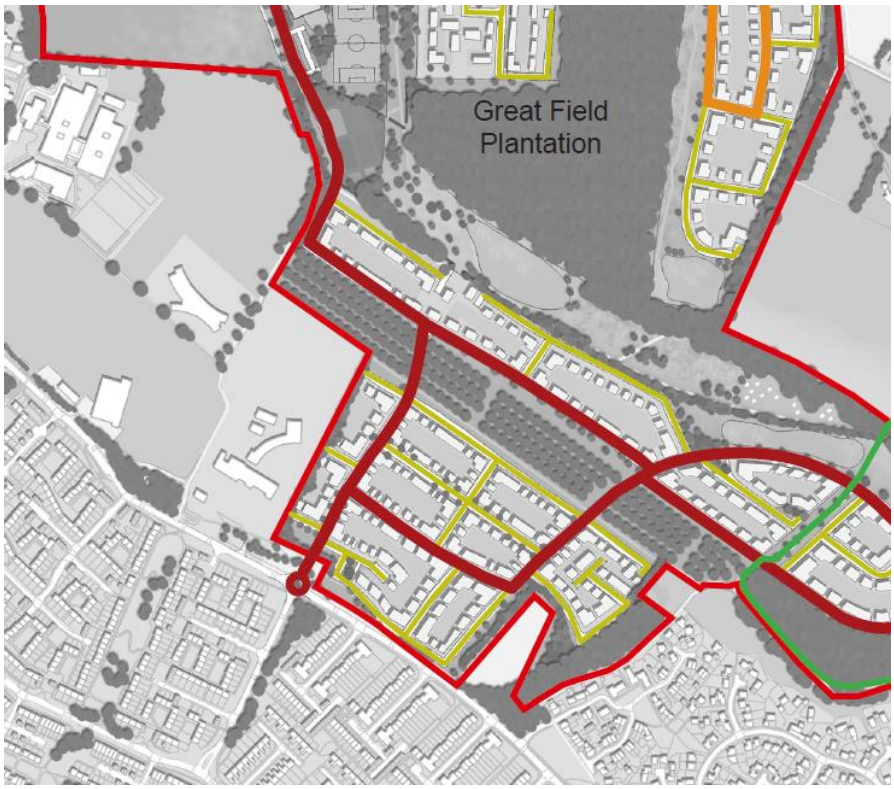
Key:



The Outline was agreed on the basis that the parcels would have access to a good quality permeable internal layout to give residents multiple routes to join the spine road and travel onto the existing strategic road network in Haverhill. Downgrading the access road through Parcel A2 will reduce the permeability through the site, and lead to traffic being focused on a limited number of streets and on a small number of key junctions. The impact of these changes in movement through the development will need to be clearly evidenced and agreed with SCC and West Suffolk Council.

The Strategic Road network shown currently does not cover access to A3 and A5, we will need to have the access strategy for these parcels confirmed as part of this process, to avoid restricting options for the future. All parcels over 150 dwellings, or combination of parcels, will need at least two access points, in line with the Suffolk County Council Design Guide. It appears that a very large proportion of the site (Parcels A2,3,5&6) are only served from a secondary route, which would not be acceptable, leading to localised congestion through the scheme and potential safety concerns for vulnerable road users.

The same issues are present on the southern parcel A8. As this provides access to Chalkstone Way to all of phase 1, and the much larger phase 2 of nearly 1600 dwellings, multiple primary route options through this parcel will be needed. See extract below:



The Access Parameter Plan was updated with the moving of the access junction from opposite Gannett Close to Millfields. It has been clear throughout that a looped arrangement of Primary Street would be required to give residents multiple routes to the spine road. Restricting the through traffic to a single primary route will result in an unacceptable localised congestion and potential safety issues for vulnerable residents, especially those on cycles and on foot. The road width shown on road section reference B1 is not sufficient for a primary movement corridor.

The Access Parameter Plan indicates that the Primary Routes would be up to 7.2 metres wide. While this is a suitable width for buses and large vehicles to pass one another without restriction, it can give rise to excessive speeds, especially outside of peak traffic conditions. Therefore, a general reduction to a nominal 6.2 metres wide would be accepted, provided that tracking is provided to show that large vehicles can pass on any tight bends.

Some additional curves and bends have been introduced to the spine road to avoid constraints on site, such as established trees, and to break up long straight sections. Again, as this reduces the expectation that traffic speeds will be excessive, it is generally supported by SCC.

Visibility Splays are shown on drawings PB8301-RHD-DE-H1-DR-D-0230 - 0232. The splays should all be drawn to Manual for Streets specification for the likely posted speed limit of 30 mph, for a Restricted Street by virtue of Streetlighting. That is to say; 43 metres by 2.4 metres. Currently some are shown as 40 metres, and some are 22 metres. Without the developer agreeing to fund a package of 20 mph Traffic Regulation Orders, and waiting to the legal process to be completed, (which is not part of the current Section 106 agreement), we would have to assume the default 30 mph speed limit would be in place, and the necessary splays would be needed to be provided. One splay, at D1 north access point, appears to cut across parcel land. This will need to be protected during the S38 process to avoid buildings, planting or fencing from restricting visibility in the future. We would require that the correctly drawn splay is clearly shown within the highway corridor.

Given the size of the development, and the concentration of traffic onto a small number of key roads, attractive, safe traffic free cycle access to each of the development parcels will be required. Currently A1 doesn't have a shared cycle footpath all the way along the spine road to the junction, and into the parcel.

This will need to be addressed in the design. Cycle access to many of the parcels is not currently shown and should be confirmed at this stage to avoid opportunities being lost as the development builds out.

The Access Parameter Plan confirms that all footways should be a minimum of 2 metres wide, and shared cycle paths are to be 3 metres minimum. Any short length pinch points will be assessed on their merits, and inter-visibility will need to be maintained between approaching pedestrian and cyclists to avoid safety issues arising. All adoptable carriageways, footways and cycle paths will need to be illuminated with standard lanterns to an agreed Suffolk County Council specification. The supplied lighting plan PB8301-RHD-DE-H1-DR-D-1300 will need to be approved by the SCC Street Lighting Engineer as part of the highways adoption process. Any potential conflicts between lighting columns, planting, trees and ecological mitigation will need to be set out clearly to the SCC Street Lighting Engineer so these factors can be considered when approval is formally sought.

From parcel A7 to the spine road junction (Inset B) the shared cycle way is not continuous along the spine road (serving phase 2) and deviates to the north of the remainder of parcel A7. This may lead the route being unattractive and cyclists travelling on carriageway, on a road that will take the majority of the future phase 2 traffic. Likewise, the proposed shared cycle route that is to the west of parcel A8. If the routes are not adjacent to the carriageway or with very good natural surveillance, they will not be attractive to all users, and this will lead to cyclists travelling along the spine road, potentially conflicting with motor vehicle traffic. If there is a cycle route to the west of parcel A8 the transition point where cyclists need to re-join Chalkstone Way will need to be carefully detailed with a suitable transition point.

The spine road design indicates several Zebra or Tiger (cycle Zebra) or uncontrolled crossing points. The proposed traffic flows and potential for higher speeds will not enable this type of crossing to operate safely. Given the traffic flows expected through the site formal push button Puffin or Toucan crossings will be required on key pedestrian and cycle desire lines.

As a general point the spine road and principal road network should have a shared cycleway throughout, and all development parcels should have access to off road cycle routes. More strategic cycle routes thorough the whole development would be useful, but these would not be as an alternative to direct route alongside the main streets.

Currently no access from the development to Samuel Ward School appears to be shown, which is a missed opportunity. It would be illogical for residents to have to travel through the site to Chalkstone Way and along the road to the main school entrance. Opportunities for sustainable links from the school to the development need to be secured, and this links need to reflect pedestrian and cycle desire lines and crossing points on the Spine Road. To a lesser extent the same could be said of access to Westfield Primary School from the site.

It is difficult to fully comment on the pedestrian and cycle access to the onsite Primary School until the internal layout is confirmed. However, all options for safe and sustainable travel to the school, with multiple safe crossing points of the main road corridor, need to be secured through the site layout. Some vehicle access and ‘kiss and drop’ will be required, along with parking for staff. The design of the access junctions, and their interface with the shared use cycle paths and other walking and cycling facilities will be critical. Ideally on a ‘blank canvas’ site like this totally traffic free cycling routes from the main parcels to the school should be provided through the layout of the site, to encourage children and parents to cycle to school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Luke Barber
Senior Development Management Engineer
Strategic Development – Resource Management