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Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)

Director of Planning

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL8 6AW

District ref: 6/2020/3222/MAJ
HCC ref: WH/5159/2021
HCC received: 11 January 2021
Area manager: Matthew Armstrong
Case officer: Samuel Tearle

Location

FORMER VOLKSWAGEN VAN CENTRE COMET WAY HATFIELD AL10 9TF

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Demolition of existing buildings and construction of new building comprising 118 residential apartments, layout of parking areas, landscaping, electricity substation and ancillary development.

Decision

OTHER

The information currently provided does not demonstrate that safe and suitable access for all users is achievable and represent a risk to the safety of the local highway and footway networks. Further information is required in terms of assessing the impact of the proposed development to the operation of the local highway network. The issues have been set out in the response below.

Until the issues have been resolved, the proposed development is contrary to policies 1 and 5 of the HCC Local Transport Plan and against the principles for safe and suitable access set out in the NPPF and therefore the Highway Authority wishes to raise an objection to the application.

Description of Proposal

A full planning application has been submitted for the redevelopment of the existing Volkswagen Commercial Vehicle Dealership (0.47ha) to provide 118 residential units. The residential units are to be in the form of 51 x 1-bed and 67 x 2-bed apartments.

Vehicular access is proposed to be via Goldsmith Way, with pedestrian / cycle access onto Comet Way.

Existing Site Description

It is understood the site was previously a Volkswagen Commercial Vehicle dealership. The site is located adjacent to Comet Way, which is a principal A road (A1001) and is subject to a 50mph speed limit. Existing vehicle access is via separate entry (left-in only) and exit (left-out only) junctions on Comet Way.

The site is bound to the south by Jetliner Way and to the west by Goldsmith Way. Jetliner Way and Goldsmith Way are both unclassified local access roads and are subject to a 30mph speed limit.

An off-carriageway cycle lane is located on Comet Way and leads northwards to Westfields Road and southwards to University of Hertfordshire De Haviland Campus.

Design Considerations

Vehicular Access

The proposals include the closure of the existing accesses on Comet Way and the provision of a new access on Goldsmith Way. An updated proposed access drawing has been provided (Drawing No. 47179/5501/103- Rev P1).

Splitter Island

The proposed access appears to be in the form of a bellmouth. There is currently a right-turn lane for access to KFC on Goldsmith Way, located to the north of the proposed site. The proposals include the provision of an informal right-turn lane through a break in the existing hatchings and also a splitter island that will separate the right-turn lane of the site access from the right-turn lane for KFC.

The Highway Authority are concerned that the splitter island will block right-turn movements out of the site for large vehicles / refuse vehicles and may result in vehicles overrunning the shared footway / cycleway opposite the access, which poses an unacceptable risk to the active travel users and is against Policies 1 and 5 of HCC Local Transport Plan. It is requested that the applicant looks to resolve this issue so that the Highway Authority are satisfied safe and suitable access for all users is achievable.

Visibility Splays

The updated proposed access drawing (Drawing No. 47179/5501/103- Rev P1) has included vehicular visibility splays. Goldsmith Way is subject to a 30mph speed limit and the drawing has demonstrated visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m are achievable.

Swept Path Analysis

The Transport Assessment has included Drawing No. 47179/5501/101 which shows a refuse vehicle of 10.564m can enter and exit the site in a forward gear. The Highway Authority requested that the design vehicle in the swept path analysis is updated to be in line with the currently used refuse vehicle in WHBC - Olympus Twin Pack, Elite2, L:11.375m, W:2.550m The swept path drawing must include the refuse vehicle turning right out of the site access (as requested in the section above).

The Highway Authority previously requested that a swept path analysis drawing is submitted that demonstrates a standard size car can complete a right-turn into the site whilst a standard sized car is positioned at the give-way line to exit the site. The proposed access drawing (Drawing No. 47179/5501/103- Rev P1) has suitably demonstrated that two standard sized vehicles can pass each other at the proposed access.

The internal highways are shown to be 6m width and are considered appropriate to serve the perpendicular parking corridor. It should be noted that if the application is permitted, the internal highways will remain private.

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

The proposed access drawing (Drawing No. 47179/5501/103- Rev P1) has suitably shown dropped kerbs and tactile paving at the proposed vehicle access.

A 3m shared pedestrian and cycle access is proposed on Comet Way that will link with the current footway / cycleway on Comet Way. Pedestrian visibility splays have been provided on Drawing No. 47179/5501/103- Rev P1 that adequately demonstrates the visibility for a cycle speed of 20mph.

Refuse Strategy

The Transport Assessment has shown on Drawing No.47179/5501/101 Rev P3 that a refuse vehicle of 10.56m can access the on-site bin stores and be positioned within an acceptable drag distance. The Highway Authority require this swept path drawing to be updated to include a refuse vehicle in WHBC - Olympus Twin Pack, Elite2, L:11.375m, W:2.550m, alongside the above requested drawing of a refuse vehicle turning right out of the site access.

Car Parking

The Transport Assessment states 100 car parking spaces are proposed (0.85 spaces per apartment). This provision will provide fewer spaces than the requirement for a development located in Zone 3 (Elsewhere) of WHBC standards. Therefore, it is considered by HCC Highways that mitigation through sustainable transport improvements listed under the planning obligations section below is necessary in order to encourage non-car use.

The Transport Assessment states 16 of the proposed car parking spaces will be designed for disabled users and eight spaces will have active EV charging points, and all other spaces provided with passive charging / retrofitted. The Highway Authority are satisfied with the proposed disabled space and EV space provisions and will request it is provided by way of condition.

Cycle Parking

The Transport Assessment states that the proposals include the provision of 164 cycle parking spaces, which is greater than the minimum of 118 cycle parking spaces required in the WHBC standards. The Highway Authority are satisfied with this provision.

The proposals include three internal cycle stores and two areas allocated for cycle stands, all of which can be accessed by the footways surrounding the site or via the internal stairwells / lobbies. The Highway Authority are satisfied with the locations.

Traffic Impact

Trip Generation

The Transport Assessment has estimated the net trip generation of the existing and proposed sites using trip rates derived from TRICs.

Existing Site (accessed via Comet Way)

The Transport Assessment has calculated the trip generation of the existing car show room using total people trip rates derived from TRICs and then applied the 2011 census mode share (WU03EW) for the super output area (E02004989) to calculate the vehicle trips.

The Highway Authority are satisfied with the trip rates and the mode share used. This has predicted the existing site has the potential to generate a total of:

- 16 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour;
- 14 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.

Proposed Site (accessed via Goldsmith Way)

The Transport Assessment has calculated the trip generation of the proposed site using total people trip rates derived from TRICs for 'Residential D - Affordable/Local Authority Flats' and then applied a 2011 census mode share to calculate the vehicle trips.

The Highway Authority are satisfied with the trip rates used if the site is to be 75%+ affordable. The applicant has used 'Affordable/Local Authority Flats'. The Design and Access Statement notes that at least 30% of the site will be affordable housing. As the affordable / private split is not fixed, the applicant should have used 'Flats Privately Owned' as this category would typically provide more robust trip rates.

For the mode share calculations, the applicant has not been consistent in the mode share selection process and used (E01033308) Census output area - for consistency with the same methodology used for the existing site trip generation (WU03EW) and reversed the selection process to account for a residential site travelling to work.

The applicant's mode share (45% car trips) has predicted a total of:

- 30 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour;
- 34 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.

If the applicant was consistent with their use of mode share selection (55% car trips), this would have predicted a total of:

- 40 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour;
- 45 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.

Net Vehicle Trips

When considering the net trip generation, the applicant has calculated the following net increases:

- +14 vehicle trips in the AM peak hour,
- +20 vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.

As identified above, if the applicant was consistent in their mode share selection, this would have resulted in the following net increases:

- +24 vehicle trips in the AM peak hour,
- +31 vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.

The applicant must resolve the issues set out above in order to provide a robust trip generation that is representative of the proposed site.

Junction Assessment

The Transport Assessment has not included a capacity assessment of the Goldsmith Way / Comet Way signal-controlled junction.

The Transport Assessment has stated that the proposed development at the Goldsmith Way / Comet Way Signalised Junction will result in:

- +1 vehicle trip every three minutes in the AM and PM peak hours.

As identified above, if the applicant was consistent in their mode share selection, this would have resulted in:

- +1 trip every two minutes in the AM and PM peak hours.

As the applicant has failed to assess the impact of the development to the operation of the junction, it is unknown whether this will result in a severe impact to the operation of local junctions. The Goldsmith Way / Comet Way signal controlled junction is in a sensitive location due to the Hatfield Police Station and Magistrates Court. The proposed closure of the existing site access on Comet

Way will result in all vehicle trips to the site routing on Goldsmith Way. A capacity assessment is required to demonstrate the impact of the site to queues on Goldsmith Way and the potential interaction with the Hatfield Police Station site access and also the proposed site access.

No capacity assessment of the proposed site access has been undertaken and therefore if queues tail back to the proposed site access in the peak hours, vehicles exiting the site may be forced to left-turn out of the site and then make unacceptable manoeuvres at the Goldsmith Way/ Tamblin Way / Jetliner Way signal controlled junction (which is subject to a number of restricted movements).

Highway Safety

The Transport Assessment has included a personal injury collision review covering the most recently available five-year period for the local highway network. The review found a total of 52 collisions, with 16 collisions involving pedestrians.

Sustainability

The closest bus stops to the site are located approximately 600m northwest of the site along Mosquito Way, which is over the desirable walking distance of 400m recommended by the CIHT Providing for Journeys on Foot, 2000. The bus stops are in the form of shelter, seating, flagpole, and timetables. The site is situated approximately 1.5km to the west of Hatfield Railway Station.

To mitigate the impact of the proposed development to the operation of the local footway, cycleway, highway and public transport networks, sustainable transport contributions are sought. The South Central Growth and Transport Plan (SCGTP) is an supporting document of LTP4 and includes Packages of transport improvements that will improve the environment and sustainable transport provision for future residents.

It is noted that the applicant has not included an assessment of local facilities and amenities within acceptable walking and cycling distances. To access local facilities, amenities, the town centre and railway station, it is envisaged future residents will need to route on the Cavendish Way / Queensway via Comet Way. Therefore, contributions are sought for the following packages:

- PK06 - Comet Way/Wellfield Road Corridor - To implement sustainable transport improvements along the Wellfield Road corridor, providing greater mode choice for trips between the Hatfield Business Park and the town centre.
- PK01 - Hatfield-College Lane/Cavendish Way Corridor - To reduce severance and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists along the College Lane/Cavendish Way corridor, enhancing connectivity between the university campuses and Hatfield town centre.
- PK02 - Hatfield-Cavendish Way/Queensway Corridor - To reprioritise the main transport corridor through Hatfield town centre to reduce the dominance of motorised vehicles, improve connectivity to the surrounding area and make a more attractive entrance to the town centre.

Travel Plan

The applicant has prepared a Residential Travel Plan. This organic document needs to be developed with details of the travel plan coordinator, specific targets developed and agreed with HCC Highways at least 3 months prior to the first occupation of the site. A support fee of £1,200 per annum for 5 years (£6,000 subject to indexation (Retail Price Index May 2014)) is recommended to be secured via a S106.

The HCC Travel Plan team have the following comments on the current travel plan which must be addressed in the next submission to bring it in-line with a full residential travel plan:

- Name and contact details of a Travel Plan Co-Ordinator (TPC);
- Interim TPC name and contact details;
- Details of a secondary contact need to be provided to HCC, once a TPC has been appointed;
- The average time per month allocated to TPC role and their frequency on site;

- The TPC should also work alongside other external partners such as bus and rail companies to increase the travel opportunities of the development;
- More walking measures required – for example - should also include promotion of Hertfordshire Health Walks;
- More cycling measures required – should include the following additional measures - cycle training, Dr Bike (or similar);
- Need to mention the provision of high-speed broadband, as measure to enable homeworking and facilitate access to home delivery services, the outcome being a reduction in the need to travel;
- Modal shift targets should have a breakdown of each mode;
- Surveys should aim to achieve a high response rate, if surveys fail to achieve this HCC would advise on Multi-modal traffic counts for the remaining survey periods. Minimum response rates should be agreed with HCC prior to surveys being undertaken;
- Review report should be submitted to HCC within 3 months of travel surveys.

Planning Obligations / CIL

If the application is granted planning permission, contributions towards sustainable transport must be sought.

WHBC are currently in the process of finalising its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and in the absence of this developer contributions are sought via S106 agreement/s using the HCC's Planning Obligations Toolkit. HCC's Planning Obligation Guidance (2008) implements a two-strand approach to planning obligations in order to address the immediate impacts of the new development (first strand), and the cumulative impacts of all development on non-car networks (second strand).

In accordance with the HCC Planning Obligations Guidance, contributions are sought on a unit rate basis and are pooled where appropriate. For residential use the charge is based on the number of bedrooms. This is calculated based on the site's accessibility zone.

The site is in Zone 3 and given the presented proposals (51 x 1-bed units @ £625 and 67 x 2-bed units @ £750) this equates to £82,125 in 2006 prices. The current SPONS pricing index suggest that this equates to £117,545 in today's prices. HCC Highways would distribute this via S106 agreements to the associated schemes.

- PK06 - Comet Way/Wellfield Road Corridor; £39,182
- PK01 - Hatfield-College Lane/Cavendish Way Corridor; £39,182
- PK02 - Hatfield-Cavendish Way/Queensway Corridor; £39,182

CTMP

If the application is permitted planning permission, the Highway Authority request by way of planning condition that a Construction Traffic Management Plan is submitted prior to construction. Due to the sensitive location of the development site, a CTMP is needed to mitigate any adverse impact from the development on the operation and safety of the local highway network

Conclusion

Currently the Highway Authority wishes to raise an objection to the development proposals due to insufficient information to demonstrate the traffic impact of the proposed site to the operation of a sensitive part of the local highway network alongside highway safety concerns regarding the access design.

Once the issues set out in this response are resolved, the Highway Authority will be in a position to raise no objection to the proposal subject to planning conditions and obligations.

Signed
Samuel Tearle

9 February 2021