

From: alan.story@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Sent: 02 August 2018 15:57
To: Planning
Subject: Planning application 6/2018/1519/MAJ - Land on the north of Chequersfield

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

District ref: 6/2018/1519/MAJ
HCC ref: WH/185/2018
HCC received: 21/06/2018
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Alan Story

Location

Land on the north of Chequersfield
Welwyn Garden City

Application type

Full application

Proposal

Erection of 30 residential units with associated vehicular access, associated ancillary and enabling works.

Decision

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:

1) The access, by reason of its width is prejudicial to the safety and convenience of pedestrians. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the access is suitable for the nature of vehicles attending the site, and has failed to provide accurate information demonstrating the effect that the proposed highway works (provision of inset car parking) shall have on the visibility splay available from the access. The access has not been demonstrated as safe.

Comments:

The site is situated on the northern side of Chequersfield on the outskirts of a new residential development, and borders flat open land to the north. To the west of the applicant site are 48 x 48 two bed dwellings and associated parking and access road (planning reference N6/2006/1124/FP) This was a reserved matters application and the principal of residential on this site had been previously agreed by the LPA. The proposed dwellings are a complete new development proposal.

Chequersfield, a local access road (unclassified) is presently private from a point 40m west of the effective give way of the western arm of the roundabout junction of Chequersfield / Howlands (unclassified, local

access) / Chequers (A1000, Principle Main Distributor). HCC are however satisfied that all works within this area of Chequersfield have been undertaken to an adoptable standard, and all RSA (Stage 3) recommendations addressed. There were, previously, three separate S38 agreements corresponding to the phasing of the wider development but these were never completed. The full development is complete and the developer seeking to progress adoption. HCC accept the principle of adopting Chequersfield (specifically that fronting the development site) and it is not unreasonable to expect the road to become highway maintainable at public expense sometime in the foreseeable future.

The development proposal seeks to provide an access onto Chequersfield. It is observed that the south western corner of the site (landscaped) is provided with an easement in respect of soakaways in this location, the development shall be expected to should not curtail such arrangements.

The development proposes 30 dwellings (residential flats) with associated parking and landscaping.

Chequersfield is provided at a width of 5.5m, sufficient to enable 2 way vehicle movement and in conformity with Roads in Hertfordshire – Design Guide specification for a Major Access, and therefore deemed sufficient to serve upto 300 dwellings.

County Council records suggest that the quantum of housing contained within Chequersfield and roads served (i.e. Chequersfield, Berwick Place, Eddington Crescent and St Josephs Green) is circa 287 individual address points (not considering any subsequent sub divisions of original housing).

HCC policy is that no greater than 300 dwellings should be served from a single point of access with the highway network – the provision of 30 dwellings shall exceed such provision by 17. Roads in Hertfordshire (table 2.1.1.1) requires that major accesses should serve no greater than 300 dwellings. Noting Eddington Crescent provides a route through the site, and that the length of Chequers Field between roundabout junctions (junction Howlands / A1000/Chequers Field, and junction Chequers Field / Eddington Crescent) is provided at a width of in excess of 10m along its' length (80m), the development is unlikely to be contrary to HCCs policy. Manual for Streets further recognises that in establishing access for emergency vehicles the Fire Authority utilises a more risk based assessment.

The planning application is submitted accompanied by a Transport Statement prepared by M-EC Consulting Engineers May 2018.

Trip generation

The Transport Statement has reviewed TRICS in establishing trip rates. The TS has selected England sites, flats privately owned and has selected edge of town / suburban sites. Sample set considers small scale developments only, and utilises 10 year data. I am satisfied with the selection of sites. Trip rates are presented within Table 7 of the Transport Statement, and necessary to note that outputs are vehicle trip rates. The development is anticipated as resulting in 8 outbound vehicle trips in the weekday AM peak hour, and similar but opposing vehicle trips in the PM peaks. The Highway Authority confirm acceptance of the TRICs assessment.

The NPPF2 (para.109) directs that development shall not be refused unless the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. I do not consider that the predicted level of vehicle trips shall have a material impact on the operation of Chequersfield roundabout junction with A1000 / Howlands, nor on the wider network.

Access

The access is shown provided to 17.8m at the junction, reducing to 12.7 at back edge of footway. Such a width is unacceptable – representing an unacceptably wide vehicle access, and an increased point of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Roads in Hertfordshire would require a Minor or Major Access to serve a development of this scale, representing carriageway width of 4.8m or 5.5m with footways.

Proposals include realignment of footway link, however pedestrians are on approach to the vehicle access from the east are directed to the bell mouth at an angle. Visually impaired persons shall be confused (even through provision of tactile (not shown) as to orientation with the access prejudicial to their safety.

No swept path is shown for the access for emergency / refuse vehicles are able to manoeuvre in a fashion that they may enter / leave in both directions. Swept path is provided for private vehicles only (Transport Statement appendix F – drawing 22573_08_020_01.1) however the Highway Authority would observe that the access road and tactile provision shown is not consistent with Drwg LSD209-01 F, The swept path drawing shows footways to a different alignment, with provision from within the site to the footway along the northern side of Chequersfield. Tactile crossing facilities are shown, however not necessarily at a desire line, and involves crossing at a particularly wide section. Carriageway width (back from bellmouth) is shown as 5.5m max on the swept path plans, contrary to the width as scaled from LSD209-01 F)

It is understood that the access also serves as a route through the site providing railtrack access to the railway. No details on swept path are provided for vehicles anticipated to use this route for maintenance of the railway.

Given the above concerns, the Highway Authority would recommend that the access be subject to a stage 1 road safety audit conducted to the appropriate requirements of DMRB in order to ensure that the access arrangements are provided in a safe manner. Such information is not submitted in accompaniment to this application.

Drawing 22573_08_020_01.1 rev A (appendix F to the TS) provides details that visibility from the access shall be provided to MfS standards appropriate for speeds in this location. HCC observe, as above, that drawing 22573_08_020_01.1 rev A does not appear to match scheme proposals as shown on drawing LSD209-01 F, consequently the extent that parking spaces interfere with visibility to the east is unclear. Actual development proposals place parking closer to the kerb radii of the junction, thereby impacting greater on visibility than that shown in the TS.

Offset of the proposed new junction to that of Eddington Crescent is an acceptable distance, and above minimum that the Highway Authority requires.

Off-site highway works.

The applicant proposes inset parking bays to the east of the proposed access, identifying them as visitor spaces (4 off). Such spaces shall require Highway Land to facilitate, and would require footway realignment with associated adoption of replacement areas of parking. The provision of parking spaces within the public highway prevents them being allocated for use by a specific user. This shall need to be considered in respect of any potential adoption of this area. The LPA shall need to consider whether the visitor bays shall be considered as contributing to parking supply for the development. Acceptant of this shall prejudice the ability for the Highway Authority to adopt the area. Clarity should be sought in respect of extents of adoption for the wider area to be secured.

Notwithstanding the above position, the parking arrangement as proposed is not workable. Bays are drawn to a maximum length of 4.8m and 3m deep. The additional width shall partially remove parking from within visibility splays from the new access, and would enable the operation of car doors without detriment to Chequersfield, but the allocated length of bay is insufficient to accommodate 5 vehicles. Manual for Streets identifies parking bays parallel to the highway should be 6m in length in order to enable vehicles to access / leave such spaces without undue detriment.

The proposed inset parking bays are provided almost abutting the necessary kerb radii, and in fact – the tails on approach to the western end bay require the removal of radii kerbs. The parking of vehicles so close to the access shall result in unnecessary confusion between vehicles trying to park and those exiting the development, as well as confusion to drivers along Chequersfield as to whether drivers in front are intending to enter the development or park in the bays.

It is the inset parking bays that direct the route for the proposed footway link and gives rise to concerns about the provision of safe facilities for pedestrians.

The County Council is supportive of proposals to provide footways to both sides of Chequersfield but consider the access arrangements, and associated crossing point, are unsuitable and present an unattractive walk route and do not support the objectives of the Highways Authority's Local Transport Plan in putting pedestrians higher within the highway user hierarchy.

Site layout

Internal routes are not consistent with HCC design standards. No footways are provided within the site, however, the nature of the access does not appear to provide safe facilities for pedestrians within the site, introducing unnecessary conflict. No speed restraint (raised table) entry features are provided.

It is accepted that vehicles speeds shall be reasonably low and unlikely that the footprint of block A shall significantly impact on forward visibility within the site.

Car Parking

The residential development, comprising a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom units, proposes 30 car parking spaces (1 per dwelling) as well as a described level of 12 visitor spaces. As above, the developers intentions to the wider adoption of the highway is sought, as it shall not be possible – if Chequersfield is to be offered for adoption – to consider those spaces parallel to Chequersfield as solely for use by the development considered herewith.

Parking within the site is provided in a manner that provides appropriate dimensions and clear space behind, such that all car parking spaces can be used without undue difficulty by modern private vehicle. The Highway Authority would observe that no provision is made for disabled parking spaces.

Sustainability

Howlands, and the local roundabout junction serving the Chequers Field estate provides off carriageway cycle provision, and Howlands carries a section of the National Cycle Network route 12 (NCN). Proposals include secure cycle parking for each block which is welcomed. Bus stops to the site are located 390 and 505m from the site. The TS recognises that stop infrastructure shall benefit from improvement, and supports a financial obligation in such a matter.

(One closer stop – within Chequers Field estate – exists but is no longer served by an active bus route.

Conclusion

Whilst the Highway Authority present no objection to the principle of development concern is voiced that the development proposals in respect of vehicle access have not been demonstrated as safe. Submission documentation is contradictory, with Transport Statement plans not corresponding to the actual submission plans. Access to the site presents an excessively wide access, and shall not conform with the Highway Authority standards. The position and arrangement of inset, on-street parking bays is not demonstrated as having an acceptable impact in respect of visibility, nor has the pedestrian route been sensitively designed to consider the needs of all highway users, particularly those more vulnerable.

The Highway Authority has previously identified an acceptance to the adoption of roads comprising Chequersfield however such process is not concluded. Development proposals as currently presented would prevent the Highway Authority from accepting this initial section of Chequersfield for adoption.

For the above reasons, I consider that the application should be refused.

Alan Story

Date 02/08/2018

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