

Highways Report

Proposal: The erection of 3 No. dwellings along with associated access and parking

Location: 52 Ash Walk, Henstridge, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0QA

LPA Ref: 17/02712/FUL

Executive Summary

Upon receipt of additional information in the form of vehicle speed survey data of traffic travelling along the A30 close to the main signalised cross-roads in the village recorded by the County Council, it needs to be confirmed that the extent of the proposed visibility splays at the point of access to the application site, particularly in the easterly direction, would be sufficient. With this in mind, the applicant should commission a traffic speed survey, to be undertaken by an independent specialist survey company, to establish the 85thile vehicle speeds on the A30 on the approach to the site access. Without this information, it is not possible to confirm whether or not the proposed visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m are sufficient to enable drivers to emerge safely from the application site onto the A30.

In the absence of such speed survey information, refusal of the application should be considered by the local planning authority for the following reason:

Insufficient information has been submitted to the local planning authority to determine whether or not the proposed visibility splays at the point of access would be adequate to ensure that vehicles can exit the site safely onto the public highway. Consequently, without such information, the proposal is considered to be contrary to paragraph 32 (second bullet point) of the National Planning Policy Framework and in conflict with Policy TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

Background

When advising the SSDC Planning Officers on the impacts of development proposals in terms of highway safety, the following main themes are considered. Under each theme the conclusions reached in this case have been set out.

Location of site: *Will the location of the site offer an opportunity for residents of the scheme to travel sustainably (i.e. to walk, cycle or use public transport to and from the site)?* In this case, the site is located in the village, within a comfortable/acceptable walking distance of the village services and facilities, including the bus services that serve the village. Therefore, the site is considered to be an acceptable location for new development in terms of residents having access to sustainable transport options.

Traffic impact of development: *How much traffic is the development likely to generate?* Generally, the traffic impact of a scheme onto the local highway network is considered during the morning AM (08:00-09:00) and afternoon PM (17:00-18:00) periods when traffic volume on the wider network is normally at its busiest. In this case, using data provided by the Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS), a development of three dwellings is forecast to generate two to three vehicle movements in the peak hours – typically two outbound and one inbound movement during the morning peak hour and one outbound and two inbound movements during the afternoon peak hour. Therefore, the traffic impact of the scheme onto the local highway network and at the nearby signalised crossroads is not considered to be significant or severe.

Standard/suitability of approach roads: *Is the width, alignment, condition of the road network and the standard of any nearby junctions, on the approaches to the site suitable to accommodate the increase in traffic resulting from the development scheme?* In this case, the A30 is clearly of a suitable standard to accommodate the minimal level of additional traffic predicted to be generated by the development.

Means of access: *Is the proposed point of access suitable/acceptable to serve as a means of access for the development scheme?* The considerations under this issue are whether or not the layout of the access in terms of its width is acceptable to accommodate the two-way movement of traffic, whether the visibility splays at the point of access are acceptable, whether the surface of the access is suitable, etc. In this case, an additional factor is the ability for vehicles to exit out onto the main highway and enter the site from the highway taking into account the potential for traffic queuing back from the nearby traffic lights. In this instance, the access would be wide enough to allow a car to enter the site should another be waiting to exit. The visibility splays at the back of the pavement would allow a driver emerging from the access to see pedestrians walking along the pavement, and a KEEP CLEAR highway marking across the access would allow vehicles to exit/enter the site should traffic be queued back from the traffic lights. However, the extent of visibility splay for vehicles to emerge safely onto the carriageway is now in question in light of the speed survey data received from the Parish Council; hence the recommendation that the applicant commissions a speed survey.

On-site parking/turning provision: *Is the level of on-site parking provision in line with the Somerset Parking Strategy (SPS) optimum standards and would vehicles have the ability to turn within the site so that reversing from or onto the public highway does not occur?* In this case, the dwellings would accommodate two bedrooms per house, which according to the SPS requires the provision of two car spaces per dwelling for residents. The SPS also requires 0.2 of a space per dwelling for visitor parking which in this case would equate to one full space (0.6 rounded up to 1). The submitted plan shows that six car spaces would be provided for residents (two per property) and one space for visitors. Therefore, the scheme is fully compliant with the parking strategy. The width of the driveway to the rear of the parking spaces is in excess of 6m. Therefore, it would be possible to manoeuvre in and out of the spaces without reversing from or onto the highway. Cycle parking should also be provided for the scheme. This can be conditioned.

Accident Data: A review of the accident data held by the Police Authority can sometimes be useful to establish if there has been any history of accidents in the vicinity of a development scheme. In this case, there appears to have been no recorded personal injury collisions along this eastern arm of the A30 close to the traffic lights in the last five years. Two incidents have occurred close to or at the junction of Vale View with the A30 further to the east in September 2012 and August 2009, and another incident occurred further to east again along Shaftsbury Road in February 2008. Upon closer scrutiny of the records, there have been no other incidents from the crossroads eastwards for a distance of 300m in the last 15 years.

Key Highways Issues

The key highway safety issue in this case is the provision of appropriate visibility splays at the access point to allow drivers to emerge safely from the site onto the public highway. Generally, in most built-up areas where the speed limit of 30mph applies, visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m are deemed to be acceptable (accounting for wet weather conditions), being in accordance with guidance set out in *Manual for Streets* which states that where the 85th percentile speeds along the main road are 30mph, visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m are recommended.

Having visited the site and observed traffic speeds, it was considered that the splays mentioned above would be suitable in this case given that westbound traffic has just travelled up an incline towards the site (which is likely to affect vehicle speeds) and that when the traffic lights are red for westbound traffic, vehicles would be decelerating. Visibility in the westerly direction for vehicles emerging from the site may be impeded by stationary westbound traffic waiting at the lights but such an occurrence is not uncommon in situations like this.

It is fair to say that it took a number of attempts for the applicant to provide the requisite site layout plan. On the latest amended plan, sightlines of 2.4m x 43m are shown. The easterly splay is taken to a point 1m off the carriageway edge but this was deemed acceptable given the guidance set out in *Manual for Streets*.

The speed survey data that has now been submitted by the Parish Council was captured at a designated site, approximately 80m west of the traffic lights on the A30 and about 150m west of the proposed site access. Therefore, it cannot be concluded with any assurances that the speeds collected at that designated point would be the same on the approaches to the application site access. However, it is considered that the submitted speed survey information is sufficient for this matter to be investigated in more detail; hence the recommendation that the applicant conducts an independent speed survey on the east side of the cross-roads to confirm whether or not the extent of the visibility splays for drivers emerging from the site would be sufficient.

The other details of the access arrangements in terms of its location being approximately 50m from the stop line of the traffic lights, being slightly staggered with the existing access opposite, being of a sufficient width (5m wide) to allow an inbound car to pass another exiting the site, accommodating the appropriate pedestrian/vehicular inter-visibility splays, the surfacing of the access, parking and turning, the provision of an adequate number of parking spaces in line with the Somerset Parking Strategy optimum levels, are all considered acceptable. The provision of KEEP CLEAR highway markings across the site access has been requested to avoid westbound traffic from blocking the access for vehicles seeking to turn right into and out of the site.

It is understood that a number of issues were raised at the Area East SSDC Planning Committee meeting on 11 October 2017. A summary of those issues and a response to the individual items is set out below:

Item 1: *The A30 at this point is subject to consistent breaches of the speed limit. Drivers speed up to get through a green/amber light, and sometimes skip the red lights.*

Response: The submission of additional information by the Parish Council in the form of speed survey data on the A30 captured by the County Council has influenced the decision to review the planning application; specifically whether or not the extent of the visibility splays at the proposed point of access would be acceptable, as set out above.

Item 2: *There are competing movements from other accesses adjacent and opposite.*

Response: It is the opinion of the highway consultant that the volume of traffic generated by the three dwellings, amounting to around two to three vehicle movements in the AM/PM peak hours (according to TRICS) is unlikely to lead to a significant number of conflicting traffic movements with vehicles using other private accesses in the immediate area.

Item 3: *Queues caused by cars wishing to turn right into the site will back up towards Milborne Port and cause a hazard for those coming out of the Templecombe arm around the blind corner.*

Response: The KEEP CLEAR road markings should prevent westbound traffic (queuing at the lights) from blocking the proposed access, thereby allowing vehicles seeking to turn right into the site, unobstructed access into the site.

Item 4: *An oil delivery lorry regularly blocks the west bound carriageway serving Combe Dene.*

Response: While this issue is worthy of note, it is a temporary and infrequent occurrence, and therefore it is considered that the development proposal should not be prejudiced by it.

Item 5: *If the Precision Clutch application (08/01404/FUL) was refused on highway grounds, why should there be highways support for this scheme?*

Response: The application for 12 dwellings and five workshops was recommended for refusal by the highway authority and subsequently refused by the planning authority for two reasons – (a) the development sought direct access to a National Primary Route via an unsafe access contrary to policy 49 of the Somerset Structure Plan, and (b) the extent of the proposed visibility splays were deemed to be insufficient, with the highway authority requiring sightlines of 70m in each direction. The subsequent appeal was dismissed. Since that application was refused, the Somerset Structure Plan has been revoked and there is no longer a policy that prevents new development deriving direct access to National Primary Routes. In addition, DfT produced *Manual for Streets* in 2007 which included new guidance on visibility splays that are lower than the previous standard set out in the *Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB)* and *Places, Streets & Movement DB32*. It is fair to say that it took some time for local highway authorities to adopt the new visibility standards. In this case, it would appear that the highway authority required the old DMRB/DB32 standards to be met which was not possible. The newer visibility splay standards set out in *Manual for Streets* have since been more readily adhered to by highway authorities, particularly since *Manual for Streets 2* was published in 2010.

Item 6: *School children use the pavement across the site frontage to get to and from school.*

Response: A specific request was made to the applicant to provide pedestrian/vehicular inter-visibility splays either side of the access in line with the SCC Highways Development Control Standing Advice guidance on this matter, so that a driver of a vehicle emerging from the site would be able to see any pedestrians walking along the pavement. This feature has been included on the submitted plans and can be conditioned. In addition, it is proposed to widen the footway across the site frontage from 1.5m to 1.8m.

Item 7: *There is no risk assessment. No account of splays, weather and speed.*

Response: The County Council is at liberty to carry out a Road Safety Audit (RSA) in respect of the access proposals at this planning application stage. When the planning application was submitted to SSDC, SCC indicated to the planning officer that Standing Advice applies in this case. This has been queried by the planning officer as to whether or not Standing Advice should apply in this instance given that the application is for three dwellings (the threshold is normally two or below when Standing Advice applies) and because the site fronts the busy A30. It is understood, however, that SCC has maintained that Standing Advice applies in this case. Notwithstanding this, the district council can insist that the County Council considers the application in more detail, and if the highway authority is minded to provide a more substantive response to the application it would be a decision

for the highway authority to consider whether or not an RSA should be undertaken by its own safety auditors. The issue of splays, weather and speed are dealt with above.

Item 8: *Could yellow hatching be employed rather than keep clear markings? (Do other access here have similar?)*

Response: Generally, yellow boxes are only be used at junctions where queuing traffic could be an issue and outside of police, fire or ambulance stations or hospitals, rather than at private accesses, such as that proposed in this case. That said, it is noted that there are yellow half-boxes at each entry/exit point of the petrol filling station located off the A357 on the northern arm of the nearby cross-roads junction and at an adjoining private domestic access. Notwithstanding this, it is the opinion of the highway consultant that KEEP CLEAR markings are the appropriate form of road markings to be used in this case. These are used throughout the country in similar situations. There are KEEP CLEAR markings at the entry/exit point to the Virginia Ash public inn on the west side of the cross-roads and outside the village hall on the A357 to the south of the cross-roads. The highway authority would have to approve the provision of any road markings on the highway (constituting an alteration to the highway layout), which is why the planning officer has been advised to consult with SCC on this particular matter.

Item 9: *Could double yellow lines be insisted upon across the site frontage to prevent residents or visitors parking on the A30?*

Response: It is the opinion of the highway consultant that even though the three dwellings would have pedestrian access directly onto the pavement fronting the site, it is unlikely that residents would park on-road outside their properties so close to the traffic lights. However, such action cannot be ruled out and therefore, there could be a case for implementing waiting restrictions along the site frontage from the cross-roads to the proposed point of access. Any such measure would require a Traffic Regulation Order and would need to be discussed and agreed with the highway authority to ensure that the County Council is content to support and enforce the implementation of such restrictions. If the highway authority is supportive of an Order, the costs would have to be met by the applicant.

Item 10: *Chaos would be caused by the construction vehicles.*

Response: It is recognised that the construction phase of any development needs to be carefully considered and managed. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) can set out measures to reduce any interruption and delay to existing vehicular traffic so as to ensure that the impacts of construction traffic in the vicinity of the site and on the surrounding highway network are kept to a minimum. Such measures could include restricting the hours of deliveries to off-peak periods, the provision of temporary traffic management if necessary, setting out and arranging the site in the most efficient manner to reduce the potential for delivery vehicles to park on the highway, consideration of environmental / living conditions and waste management, setting out a programme of works, liaison with the highway authority at all stages, etc. The CTMP would have to be submitted and approved by the local authorities prior to commencement of the development.

Other matters: *On-road parking to the east of the site would obscure visibility for vehicles exiting the site.*

Response: Parking on the public highway should not occur, as of right, and where it presents a safety problem the Police Authority has the necessary powers to take enforcement action and to prevent it from taking place. That said, it is not possible to monitor situations such as this on a daily basis.

Equally, however, it is not considered reasonable to reject a planning proposal on these grounds given that parked vehicles are movable obstructions.

Since the application was presented to the SSDC Area East Planning Committee, representations have been submitted by the following:

Mr O'Donnell on 23/10/17 - Receipt of photographs and videos on memory stick

Mr O'Donnell on 19/10/17 - Email and letter of representation

Mr Player on 18/10/17 - Email with photos

Mr Player on 14/10/17 - Submission of Community Speed Watch data

Mr Player on 13/10/17 - Email concerning Community Speed Watch data

Henstridge Parish Council on 13/10/17 - Speed Indicator Device data

The above representations have been considered and taken into account when preparing this report.

Mike Bellamy

SSDC Highways Consultant

26 October 2017