

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

FROM: D&E HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Date: 09 March 2015 **INCLUDING UPDATES OF 04 September & 23 October 2015**
Development Control Case Officer: Neil Underhay

Application No: 15/P/0167/O

Location : Land at Bleadon Hill, Bleadon

Proposal: Outline planning permission for the erection of up to no.79 open market and affordable dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure. All matters reserved for subsequent approval except for means of access

Formal comments from Highways Development Management

Site Details

The development site forms a parcel of land to the south of Bleadon Hill, at the western edge of Bleadon. The site is formed of two agricultural fields, and is bounded to the north by Bleadon Hill, which is a C Class Highway. The site is in a relatively rural location, and whilst it is bounded to the west by Bleadon, both to the south and east of the site are agricultural fields. On the northern side of Bleadon Hill is the development of Hillcote which has a number of residential dwellings within it.

Bleadon Hill is a C Class Highway which links to the A370 in the west via a priority crossroads. It is subject to a 30mph speed limit. Bleadon Hill is rural in its nature, with no footways in close proximity to the development. At the proposed site access the road is circa 5 metres in width, however towards the west of the proposed access the road narrows to 4 metres. This section of road operates as an informal give way arrangements as it is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass.

Surveys completed by the applicant indicate that whilst the road is subject to a 30mph speed limit, the 85% percentile speeds on this section of carriageway are closer to 35mph in both directions. It is however noted that further west on Bleadon Hill (near the junction with Mendip Edge) speeds are around 28mph. Traffic counts on Bleadon Hill indicate two way flows in the morning peak of 102 vehicles and 114 vehicles in the evening peak.

Towards Bleadon in the west there are limited pedestrian facilities. There are no footways along Bleadon Hill in the west for approximately 200 metres. Approximately 80 metres east of the site access is a bus stop which comprises of a flag and pole.

Application

The applicant is proposing the construction of 79 open market and affordable dwellings, including public open space and associated infrastructure. This is an outline application with all matters reserved except access. The development is proposing a new access directly from Bleadon Hill. The application includes offsite highway works include formalisation of the existing give way arrangement to a give way arrangement, with vehicles from the west having priority over those from the east. The plans also indicate that a length of new footway will be provided within the site

boundary. This is indicated to be behind the hedgerow and therefore won't run directly adjacent to the carriageway. The applicant is also proposing improvements to the existing bus stop on Bleadon Hill.

Whilst parking will be determined at the reserved matter stage, parking will need to be delivered in line with the Authority's parking SPD.

Site Access

The application will be served by a new access from Bleadon Hill. The proposed access is 5.5metre wide with a 6 metre radius. TD42/95 states that where no provision is made for large vehicles; in urban areas a minimum 6 metre radius should be provided, and in rural areas a 10 metres radius should be provided. This is a recommended design feature, and not a mandatory requirement of TD42/95. Whilst the design conforms to the 'urban' design specification, it does not meet the 'rural' recommendation, which would be Highways preference in a location such as this.

Tracking assessment of the proposed junction demonstrates that a waste collection vehicle will struggle to navigate the junction, and when turning into the site will encroach on the opposing lane of traffic. Whilst this layout is not ideal; it is accepted that given the scale of the development and the relatively minor number of larger vehicles (such as waste collection) likely to access the site this would not warrant a refusal from Highways. Should you be minded to recommend approval for the application, please condition that the junction radius is increased to 10 metres.

The junction designs indicate that following a 2.4metre setback, 59 metres of visibility is available in either directions. Manual for Streets states that for roads with a 30mph speed limit the required visibility is 40 metres. Should this design speed rise to 37mph then the required visibility is 56 metres. The speed surveys indicated that the 85th Percentiles are closer to 35mph near the proposed site access. Given the available visibility at the proposed junction exceeds the visibility for a 37mph design speed; Highways is content that the site access meets the visibility requirements.

The junction designs have been supported by a PICADY assessment, which is the industry recognised tool to assess the capacity of priority junctions. Having considered the submitted assessment Highways are content that the proposed access will have adequate operational capacity.

Highway Considerations

The application is supported by a transport assessment prepared by TPA. This has used the industry recognised TRICS database to determine the likely trip generation of the proposed development site. Because of the agricultural nature of the site, it is assumed that all trips generated by this development will be new to the network. The assessment has determined that the site will generate a total of 43 two way movements in the morning peak, and 45 two way movements in the evening peak.

The distribution and assignment of these new trips onto the highway network have been considered using a number of different assessment options within the TA. The first option has assigned traffic using the traffic survey counts completed by the applicant. This would assume 68% of traffic would route to the west of the site towards the A370/Totterdown, and 32% of vehicles would travel east. Using the trip generation figures above, in the morning this would equate to 30 vehicles leaving/arriving the site and travelling down Bleadon Hill, and 13 heading towards or coming from the east. In the evening peak it is predicated that 31 will head towards/from Bleadon, and 14 will travel to/from the east.

The second methodology is based on census travel to work data, which indicates the percentage split is likely to have a much higher bias to the west; with nearly 88% of vehicles heading to/from Bleadon Hill. In the morning peak this would equate to 38 vehicles heading to/from Bleadon Hill,

and 5 towards the east. In the evening figures these would be 40 to/from Bleadon and 5 to/from the east.

It is recognised that there are a number of routes vehicles can take once they reach Bleadon Hill, with vehicles likely to continue along Bleadon Hill to the junction of the A370, or heading down Totterdown Lane towards Oldmixon. Using the robust assessment of 88% towards Bleadon, and making an assumption about route choice once they reach Bleadon Hill; the actual impact on the local road network is likely to be minor and in the region of 20 trips on each route.

Considering the level of proposed traffic at the site entrance against the surveyed data; the development equates to an increase of 42% in the morning peak, and 39% in the evening peak. Percentage uplifts in traffic are often misleading representations of the likely impact of development traffic on the local road network, and encourages locating development at already busy network locations where the relative percentage impact is smaller. In this case the actual uplift of vehicle numbers is less than one a minute across the hour, and this level of increased vehicle numbers will not cause a significant impact on the highway in the close proximity of the site access.

It is recognised that the roads around Bleadon Hill, including Totterdown Lane are rural in nature, however the level of traffic predicted to use the local road network would not cause the highway links to reach their theoretical capacity and there is no evidence to suggest that the trips from the development will cause a demonstrable impact on the operation of the highway.

Proposed Mitigation

The applicant has proposed to formalise the existing give away arrangement to the west of the proposed development with a small build out. This will also tie in with the proposed pedestrian improvements on the site. The proposed improvements have been subject to a Stage 1 RSA which has not raised any fundamental concerns with the proposed mitigation. This scheme will need to be delivered through a S106 agreement.

Given the rural nature of the roads around the development site; should the development be minded for approval Highways would expect a construction management plan to be provided which considers how the impact of construction traffic will be managed throughout the construction period.

Sustainability

As discussed above, the site is in a relatively rural location and the facilities for pedestrians are limited with stretches of highway where pedestrian are required to walk with traffic. Whilst the applicant is proposing a footway within the development site which is considered betterment over the existing situation on Bleadon Hill; even with this new footway in place pedestrians will be forced to walk with traffic for a section of approximately 150 metres. In places this section of Bleadon Hill is restricted in width which further compounds the situation of pedestrians having to walk with traffic. Whilst it is noted that this is a requirement of residents of Hillcote if they wish to walk to facilities; this development of 79 dwellings will intensify the potential number of pedestrians having to walk with traffic on Bleadon Hill. This increase in risk and conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles has not been mitigated by the applicant and the development is therefore contrary to Policy T10 of the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan (2007) and Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy.

Notwithstanding the above comments about the potential road safety issues relating to increases in pedestrian movements, the site is in a rural location and located a considerable distance from key facilities. The applicant has made reference to the IHT document 'Providing for Journeys on Foot', which provides guidance on acceptable walking distances. For town centres the desired maximum distance is 800metres, for commuting/school trips it is 2,000metres and elsewhere is 1,200 metres. Table 2.2 of the TA provides a summary of local services and amenities within

walking and cycling distance of the site. The majority of these key facilities, including leisure, health, and retail falling outside of the desired maximum distance (1,200metres) stated within the IHT document. It is recognised that Oldmixon primary school and Weston College fall within the maximum desired distance being located 1,800 metres from the site. However, Weston College is a post 16 education facility, and the closest secondary school is Broadoak, which is closer to 2,500 metres away from the development site and therefore outside the guidelines within the IHT document.

It should be borne in mind that the topography around the development site means that whilst it is possible to walk to these facilities, the gradient is likely to dissuade residents from walking to these facilities. Furthermore, as discussed above the pedestrian facilities around the site are incomplete and there are narrow sections where pedestrians are required to walk with traffic. These factors combined mean it is unlikely residents will choose to make many walking trips from the development.

Residents will therefore be required to either travel by private vehicle or via public transport. Weston railway station is located approximately 4.5Km from the development site, and whilst residents may choose to travel by rail they will more than likely drive to the station to continue the journey by rail. It is noted that there is a bus stop close to the site which will be improved as part of these proposals. At the time of writing this stop is served by the 83 service which is provided by Crosville. This is a 90 minute frequency service which does not leave Bleadon until 09:10 and therefore is not appropriate for use by commuters or the school run.

Furthermore as of the end of March 2015 this service is being discontinued, and replaced by Service 4A. This service is the Hutton to South Road service which only stops in Bleadon on the return journey, the first of which does not stop in Bleadon until 08:45. This does have an increased frequency to an hour which is betterment over the existing 83 service; however it is not considered that this provides a realistic alternative to the private car. Given the sites relatively rural location and lack of sustainable travel opportunities, the site is considered contrary to Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy.

Recommendation

Considering the above points, Highways cannot support the proposals and is therefore recommending that the application is refused on the following:

- The site is in a relatively unsustainable rural location, with limited non car opportunities and is therefore contrary to Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy
- The development will intensify the conflict between Pedestrians and vehicles on Bleadon Hill and is therefore contrary to Policy T/10 of the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan and CS10 of the Core Strategy

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Further formal comments from Highways Development Management

These further comments are made following a meeting with the applicants' transport consultants on 19 June 2015 and with the benefit of further submissions including the following:

- Email of 19 June 2015 from Transport Planning Associates (TPA) comprising a summary of the discussions at the meeting of the same date and effectively comprising a position statement on the outstanding issues between Highways and the applicant at that time.
- Technical Note No.2 – Post Submission matters, dated July 2015 and which was received by email on 21 July 2015. This included as appendices:
 - TPA Drawing no. 1402-13-SK03, Proposed Scheme East of the Telephone Exchange including Site Access;
 - TPA Drawing no. 1402-13-SK04 A, Proposed Scheme West of the Telephone exchange;
 - Road Safety Audit Stage 1, prepared by TMS dated 14 July 2015, including Designers Response dated 17 July 2015;
 - TPA Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit, Ref 1402-13/NMU/01 dated July 2015.
- Email of 4 September 2015 setting out details of a potential new bus service 104 to be run by Crosville.

This advice is set out in the order that the issues were dealt with in TPA Technical Note 2.

Policy

There are no outstanding Highway policy issues.

Conflict with pedestrians

The Technical Note 2, Road Safety Audit, including designers Response, and NMU audit, all address this directly.

The Safety Audit assessed the mitigation proposals shown on drawings 1402-13-SK03 and 1402-13-SK04 A. A number of problems were identified, recommendations were made by the auditors to address the issues raised, and Designers Response accepted the recommendations.

The proposed works as amended by the Safety Audit Designers Response are acceptable to mitigate the impact. Subject to the applicant entering into S106 agreement to implement the works as detailed in those documents, at their expense, under a S278 agreement this will overcome the concerns in relation to conflict with pedestrians. The works will need to be subject to detailed design which must first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council and must be

implemented prior to first occupation. **Please attach an appropriate condition to any consent that may be issued.**

Non-motorised user routes to local services

During the meeting held on 19th June it was agreed that further consideration of the existing NMU routes between the site and essential local services could be informed by the preparation of a NMU audit. That audit identified 7 Issues and 8 actions were recommended. The designers' response to those recommendations is acceptable and appropriate.

The works to be implemented as detailed in the NMU audit and designers' response will also need to be implemented by the applicant at their cost and secured by condition. **Please attach an appropriate condition to any consent that may be issued.**

Public Transport

In response to concerns about the suitability of the existing local bus service to meet the needs of new residents the applicant has been in discussion with local operator Crossville Motors. This has led to preparation of a draft route and timetable for a new bus service to serve the site. The service would be an hourly service which would stop at the hospital and near the Oldmixon shops before continuing to Regent Street in Weston-super-Mare. The service would not replace the existing service 4A but would complement it. Together the two services will providing a 30 minute frequency throughout the day between the Town Centre and Bleadon Hill.

The applicant is willing in principle to agree appropriate S106 Heads of Terms to secure the service. The bus operator provided indicative costs to cover a period of three years, after which they believe the service will be commercially viable.

This is a welcome proposal which is considered fair, reasonable, proportionate and directly related to the development. **Please condition any consent accordingly.**

Sustainability

Previous advice raised detailed concerns about the transport sustainability of the proposed development, with particular regard to accessibility to local facilities and services. Whilst some are beyond suggested distances set out in guidance it is also clear that in other respects this site is relatively well located. For example, being located on the edge of Weston super Mare, access by car to major food retailers is very good when compared to sites in more rural communities. Thus, taken with the proposed enhanced bus service it is now considered that, whilst the transport sustainability is still recorded as a concern, it is not one which in and of itself, would justify a highways recommendation for refusal. However, it is recommended that the planning officer weigh transport sustainability in the balance with all other relevant criteria when assessing the overall sustainability of the proposal.

Recommendation: In view of the forgoing considerations and subject to the suggested conditions and legal obligations listed within this advice there is **no highway objection** to the proposed development.

Informative - Works in Highway

Please append the following in relation to the works in the highway – Under section 184 (Highways Act 1980), any new works within the highway boundary must be to the Council's specification and prior to any works the developer must arrange with the Council's Streets & Open Spaces Highway Maintenance Team (01275 888802) for the approval of the works within the highway. Such approval is required regardless of any other permissions or consents (eg planning permission) that may be granted by the Council.

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Following submission of the previous update of Highways observations on 4th September 2015 you requested clarification of two issues which may be expressed in the following questions:

- Are officers satisfied that the proposed bus service will become viable after 3 years; and
- In view of the current local planning application for residential development at Wentwood Drive, would there be a material highways impact if both were granted consent?

Bus Service Viability

Two sources confirm the potential viability.

Firstly the Council has received an email from the proposed operator which clearly expresses the confidence that they can deliver a reliable new service, supported by the best possible marketing campaign which will be sustainable and operate on a commercial basis after a three year show case marketing plan.

Secondly the Public Transport Officer has advised that:

“The operator has shared with me the proposals so I am aware of what they are proposing and I certainly support the service coming forward as part of the Bleadon Hill development.

In terms of commercial viability, I share the operator’s view that commercial viability could be achieved by the end of the contract period. However, inevitably this will be partly dependent upon factors beyond our control and will be wholly dependent upon an effective marketing campaign. I would therefore encourage you to seek details of a marketing programme to support the launch of the service. Such marketing could include timetable leaflets, local events, newspaper advertising, bus shelter notices, social media etc”.

He further states that:

“Whilst I share the view that this service could become sustainable after three years, that is only likely to happen with an effective marketing campaign to support it and a reliable service operation.

A final comment is on contract management. If this is going to be a private arrangement between the developer and the bus operator, who manages that contract and how do we hold both the developer and the bus operator to account? At what point would the developer be in breach of the planning obligation should the operator not perform?”

It is recommended that obligations relating to marketing campaign and enforcement of obligations should be matters to be included in draft Heads of Terms for the proposed S106 Agreement.

Cumulative Impact

Individually the two developments are predicted to generate the following traffic movements in the peak hours.

	AM Peak	PM Peak
Bleadon Hill	43	45
Wentwood Drive	33	35

These volumes will disperse via several alternative routes to the variety of destinations across the network. However, by examination of both transport assessments it is reasonable to assume that the greatest combined impact is likely to occur on Totterdown Lane, north of Wentwood Drive, where together they are likely to add 43 and 44 additional movements in the morning and evening peak periods respectively. These would represent increases of 29% and 38% when compared to existing flows.

These volumes of increase would be likely to be noticeable to residents but would be well within the capacity of the road and could not be considered as material under the terms of NPPF.

Recommendation: These further comments have been provided in response to requests for further information. The proposed bus service is expected by the proposed operator and the Public Transport Officer to be viable following initial support from the applicant and the potential cumulative impacts of the Bleadon Hill and Wentwood Drive applications, if both were consented, have been described.

This additional information does not change the highways recommendation of 4th September 2015 to the effect that there is **no highway objection** to the proposed development.