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DMM/AJB/M.096

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Dear Mr Harris

Planning Application APP/19/00768:
Land to the Rear of 15-27 Horndean Road, Emsworth:
Response to Highways Comments

Introduction

You have sent me copies of three documents relating to highways comments for the above planning application. I note that objections are only made by third parties and that the Highway Authority is supportive of the application. I respond below in details to each of the documents in turn.

I firstly deal with the comments made by Transport Planning Associates on behalf of an unnamed objector. I include a discussion of the further details sent on the 24 September, 2019. I find the objection ill-founded.

I next deal with an objection which includes highway comments. I find that the objection is based on a lack of understanding of standards and their implementation.

I finally provide further information and clarification as requested in the letter of the Highway Authority in support of the application.

Objection by Transport Planning Associates

Transport Planning Associates has made an objection to the planning application. The objection document states that the objection is on behalf of an adjacent landowner but does not advise on who that landowner is nor the property involved.

The objection covers three issues. I shall address each in turn. I shall also address the further information supplied by Transport Planning Associates in an e-mail dated 24 September, 2019.

Site Sustainability

I note that the site forms part of the Southleigh Masterplan Area. As such it is an allocation site. Clearly the planning authority had a mind to the sustainability of the site when it was allocated. I note that a development under planning permission APP/17/00358 is being constructed north of the application site and thus further from the primary school, town centre shops and the railway station.

This objection does not seem to me to be well founded in relation to the status of the site and of adjacent planning consents

Visibility Splays

The traffic survey on Horndean Road and presented in the Transport Statement was undertaken principally to obtain traffic speed data. This traffic speed data was necessary to confirm that the visibility splays available met standards and therefore provided a safe access solution.

I know of no reputable document which indicates that traffic speeds vary markedly during school holiday periods. Indeed, I have with the agreement of highways officers, undertaken speed measurement surveys during school holiday periods elsewhere in Hampshire. In that regard, the survey having been undertaken during a school holiday period is not material. I acknowledge that traffic volumes will have been affected during the school holiday period.

The objection notes that the average and 85th percentile speeds exceed the speed limit. This is true of many urban roads. Manual for Streets implicitly acknowledges this by giving visibility 'Y' distances for speeds up to 37 miles per hour.

The visibility splays available from the site have been prepared on topographical survey data and adopted highway plans. Plans showing the available visibility splays have been provided with the planning application and are available within the planning website. There does not appear to me to be any merit in replicating drawings within the planning application.

I note that the objector has provided a drawing, 1908-015 VS01 showing his interpretation of available visibility splays. This drawing appears to be based on Ordnance Survey mapping, and cannot therefore be regarded as sound in detail.

The objection states that the Road Safety Audit is deficient in not noting street furniture in relation to visibility splays. The suggestion that an 'independent RSA' be undertaken by HCC suggests that the Safety Audit team did not undertake an impartial audit. Such a suggestion would be libellous if that were the intent of the comment.

It must be noted that Safety Auditors only comment on areas where the audit team seek changes to the design. If the audit team felt that street furniture did not cause safety issues, then this would not be mentioned in the Audit report.

I would further note that Manual for Streets indicates that occasional obstacles to visibility that are not large enough to obscure a whole vehicle will not have a significant impact on road safety.

The objector suggests that 85th percentile speed should be used for the calculation of visibility splays rather than the 85th percentile wet weather speeds stated in standards. The objection gives no sensible rationale for this suggestion and it should therefore be ignored.

I note that the objector measured visibility splays during a site visit. I am unsure how he was able to undertake such measurements without entering the application land. As the land is overgrown at the proposed site access, I am uncertain that measurements could be taken accurately. I repeat that the visibility splays given in the planning application are based on a topographical survey with adopted highway information.

Proximity of Adjacent Access

Closely spaced and adjacent accesses serving low traffic generators such as small residential developments or single employment uses are a feature of urban road and do not generally seem to cause collision difficulties.

Many developments accessed by such closely spaced accesses have retail uses. These uses will be visited frequently by irregular or single visit drivers. Such accesses do not generally seem to give rise to driver confusion.

The Further Information

I have received the further information provided by Transport Planning Associates (TPA) in regard to their un-named clients objection. I have the traffic survey which the further information addresses. I have not checked the comments against the survey as I am content that any minor errors in transposition are not important.

The table of comparison of vehicle counts between the traffic survey included with the Transport Statement and that of TPA indicates that the flows are greater than those given in the Transport Statement. As noted above, the traffic survey in the Transport Statement was primarily taken for speed measurement purposes. However, the later TPA data reinforces the commentary in the Transport Statement that the traffic flows generated by the proposed development are below 5% of the flows on Horndean Road, and are therefore not material.

I note that the traffic speed recorded in the TPA survey are about 4 miles per hour slower than those given in the Transport Statement. As noted in the TPA commentary, these later speeds would indicate that the visibility splays required to meet standards will be lower than those posited by the Transport Statement traffic survey. As the site access provides visibility splays meeting the higher of the two survey results, the proposed splays are suitable for the proposed access. As noted below, I attach a drawing showing the proposed visibility splays on an extract of the topographical survey base with the extent of adopted highway added. As illustrated, the visibility splays of 2.4 metres x 59 metres in both directions can be delivered within the adopted highway.

An Objection Letter including Highways Comments

The objection is based on two grounds; highways problems and nitrate balance. This letter only addresses the highway issues raised by the objector.

The objector states that the access is a narrow entry road. The proposed highway access width meets standards prepared by the Highway Authority and is therefore acceptable. Its siting opposite another dwelling on Horndean Road does not of itself make the access unsafe. There are accesses opposite Bellevue Road. These access do not have a safety issue record.

The planning application is supported by a traffic survey giving details of traffic speeds over a 7-day period. The dimensions for the visibility splays arise from the use of the 85th percentile wet weather speeds derived from the speed survey. This method is as given in the appropriate standards. Maximum speeds are never used for highway design purposes.

The proposed access has been tested by an independent Safety Audit team. The Safety Audit Report and the Designer Response form part of the planning application. The Safety Audit team did not find that the proposed visibility splays are deficient.

I would note that the visibility splays proposed for this development of 16 dwellings is the same as that approved for the development of 125 dwelling presently under construction further north on Horndean Road. They meet standards.

The Transport Statement accompanying the planning application records details of personal injury collisions on Horndean Road adjacent to the site. This is recognised as a proxy for minor collisions. There have been no collision adjacent to the site access in the five year study period.

The proposed access visibility splays meet standards. The splays are derived from a 7-day traffic speed survey adjacent to the site.

Letter from Hampshire County Council

The highways officer correctly notes that the application site forms part of the Southleigh Masterplan area. He also notes that the site is separated from the main body of the Masterplan area by a watercourse and floodplain. These features prejudice the development of the site by provision of an access from the west. This part of the Masterplan area is therefore best accessed from Horndean Road to allow the fullest development of the Masterplan area.

It is recognised by the applicant that appropriate infrastructure charges should be met.

As noted above, I attach an extract from the topographical survey obtained for the design of the development. The extent of highway information and the visibility splays have been superimposed on the survey. The drawing shows that the visibility splays are wholly within adopted highway. The provision in the access of a brick paviour strip is proposed to demark the public realm from the 'private' residential cul-de-sac development. This is intended to offer a small protection against entry to the proposed development by persons with no good reason to be within the development. Clearly there are other ways in which this aspiration can be met.

It is not intended to offer the development for adoption.

The access arrangement has been chosen to reflect the circumstances of Horndean Road. There are existing private drive accesses immediately adjacent to the site access corridor. These preclude the provision of a bellmouth as they would exit within any bellmouth junction.

Further, footway crossing accesses are common on Horndean Road, not least the access and egress to the recreation ground to the south of the application site. The collision data shows these access and others on Horndean Road to be safe. The Safety Audit does not recommend a bellmouth type access.

The conditions suggested by the highways officer are appropriate for the site.

Summary

The objectors have raised issues in relation to the visibility splays from the site. The issues raised do not reflect standards and best practice highway engineering.

The highways officer has queered the proposal for a footway crossing access to the site. The proposals meet the circumstances of Horndean Road and the access corridor to the site. It is noted that the highway officer recommends approval with conditions. These conditions are appropriate for the application development.

The site is suitable for the proposed redevelopment.

Yours sincerely



David Mason
for
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cc Ray Alborough, Economy, Transport and Environment Department, Hampshire County Council

