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Highways and Transportation

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Date: 8 November 2023

Our Ref:

Application - MBC/23/504471/OUT

Location - Land At Moat Road Headcorn Maidstone TN27 9NT

Proposal - Outline application (with all matters reserved except access) for the development of up to 120no. dwellings (Use Class C3) including demolition of existing buildings, new means of access into the site from Moat Road (not internal roads), associated highway works, provision of public open space, emergency/pedestrian access to Millbank, and associated infrastructure including surface water drainage (with related off site s278 highway works to Moat Road).

Introduction

The proposals seek permission for a development of up to 120no. dwellings (*Use Class C3*) including demolition of existing buildings, means of access into the site from Moat Road (*not internal roads*), associated highway works, provision of public open space, emergency / pedestrian access to Millbank, realignment of the existing public right of way and associated infrastructure including surface water drainage.

Kent County Council (*KCC*) Highways note that the proposals are supported by a Transport Assessment (*TA*), which is dated September 2023 and was produced by David Tucker Associates.

The *TA* seeks to address the concerns previously raised by this authority in response to the previous, all be it withdrawn application (*MBC reference: 22/505616/OUT*). I have the following highway comments to make in respect of it:

Access

Vehicular

Consistent with the requirements of the Kent Design Guide (*KDG*) the development will be served by a singular all purpose vehicular access and additional secondary, emergency only access.

Primary access is to be taken from Mote Road in the form of a simple priority junction. As requested in *KCC* Highways response to the withdrawn application additional traffic surveys have been completed. These surveys identify 85th percentile speeds of 43.1 mph eastbound and 44.8 mph westbound. Given how the splays proposed are in accordance with

the requirements for identified speeds and achievable within the existing highway boundary or land within the applicant's control they are acceptable to KCC Highways.

Whilst the extension of the existing 30 mph is considered sensible given how the built-up area would be increased, in the event of planning permission being granted, importantly the proposed access strategy is not dependent upon this. A best endeavours condition relating to the extension of the 30mph limit should be attached to any consent.

To address this authority's concerns regarding the propensity for the larger vehicles to overrun adjacent the traffic lanes the applicant has incorporated an overunable area. Whilst this would assist in better accommodating left turns out the site by larger vehicles, other movements would still require the use of adjacent lanes.

Although KCC Highways maintain the view that the optimum arrangement would be to fully accommodate larger vehicles, it is acknowledged that movements by such vehicles are infrequent. Consequently, a highway-based objection on these grounds in isolation is not considered reasonable.

Further information on the suitability of the emergency access has also been provided. This confirms that whilst the access track can accommodate two-way flow near to the junction of Mill Bank, it is limited to one-way flows in sections. The TA does not confirm the extent or location of the area of one way working.

Finally, the previously requested stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) and supporting designer's response has now been provided. 2 problems have been raised with the RSA, with the applicant accepting the auditor's recommendation in both instances.

Pedestrian

To ensure pedestrian connectivity with the village centre the applicant is proposing a road narrowing scheme that would involve a priority working arrangement. Importantly, the applicant has provided a drawing (*drawing number:20473-03-2 Rev D titled 'Visibility Splays'*) demonstrating that adequate levels of intervisibility can be achieved.

As a result of the applicant's proposed narrowing, they are able to provide a footway connection along the site frontage that would link in with the existing footway on the southern side of Mote Road. The footway would vary from 1.5 to 2 meters in width.

Confirmation that the footway link will connect with the development's internal footpaths is welcomed. As only outline permission is sought at this time it is accepted that how this will interface with the site's internal layout will form part of reserved matters, should permission be granted. It is also accepted that details relating to the lighting of the proposed narrowing will be agreed as part of any S278 Agreement.

Sustainability

Walking and Cycling

Section 3.6 of the applicant's TA contains an assessment of the propensity for travel by walking and cycling. This assessment correctly identifies the fact that subject to the provision of the proposed footway link the site is within walking distance of many local amenities.

Whilst this assessment highlights the presence of the nearby primary school it fails to acknowledge the lack of controlled crossing facilities at the adjacent crossroads. Consequently, residents wishing to complete pedestrian trips to/from the school would have to walk to the

controlled facilities in the village centre to access a safe and suitable crossing. It is therefore considered that the applicant has still not confirmed how pedestrian movements from Kings Road to Mote Road would be safely accommodated.

Public Transport

As set out within the TA owing to the development's location on the outskirts of village centre it is well placed for trips by alternative modes. Headcorn train station is a mainline station offering services to a range of local and regional destinations at a good level of frequency. In addition, the site is within walking distance of bus stops that also offer regular services in the direction of Maidstone.

Trip Generation

The development is anticipated 78 trips (*combined arrivals and departures*) in AM peak and 70 trips in the PM peak.

To derive these forecasts the applicant has interrogated the TRICS database in conjunction with Census Travel to Work Data for Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) that the site is located in. This analysis confirms that a significant proportion (67%) of the existing population travel to work using the private motor vehicles.

Given how the applicant's site selection parameters focus on sites in an 'edge of town,' or 'suburban' location with comparable locational characteristics to the development site, they are considered acceptable for assessment purposes.

Trip Distribution and Assignment

It is noted that the applicant has again made use of Census Travel to Work Data to distribute the development trips, with them assigned across the network using a real time journey planner. Such an approach is acceptable to KCC Highways given how it is reasonable to assume the travel patterns of the perspective residents would be similar to the existing, with use of a real time journey planner reflecting the propensity for road users to choose the route that affords the quickest journey time. Based upon the methodology utilised by the applicant the majority (82%) of trips are expected route to/from the nearby signalised crossroads.

Assessment Methodology

The applicant's capacity assessments are based upon traffic surveys completed in July 2022 and March 2023. Given how these surveys were completed during a traffic neutral period, outside of any Covid-19 restrictions their use is considered acceptable.

To reflect the current Local Plan Period the applicant has adopted a horizon year of 2031, with Tempro growth rate used to growth the baseline traffic years up to the horizon year. KCC Highways consider such an approach to be acceptable.

Contrary to this authority's formal pre-application advice the applicant has not explicitly accounted for nearby committed development (*MBC reference: 15/503325/HYBRID, 220 dwellings*). This is on the basis that the majority of the development is now built out, with any residual elements of the development being accounted for within the Tempro growth factors. Owing to the advance stage of the development question, in this instance the approach adopted is considered acceptable.

Traffic Impact

Site Access junction with Mote Road (*Priority Junction*)

The applicant's capacity assessment confirms that following the addition of the development traffic the junction will operate within capacity, without any unacceptable levels of queuing or delays.

Mill Bank/Kings Road/North Street/Mote Road (*Signalised Crossroads*)

The applicant's capacity assessment confirms that the junction currently operates without any capacity issues. Following the addition of the development traffic the junction is anticipated to continue to operate within capacity, without any unacceptable levels of queuing or delays.

Wider network (*Staplehurst and Linton Crossroads*)

To determine the likely impact of the development across the wider network a percentage impact assessment has been completed. This assessment compares the junctions existing traffic flows against the additional trips the development is anticipated to generate through them.

In all assessed periods the development is forecast to increase traffic by no greater than 0.3%. Such modest increases in traffic are likely to be well within daily fluctuations and as such KCC Highways consider the impact across the wider network to be acceptable.

Parking, Scale and Layout

As only outline planning permission is sought at this time matters relating to the development's internal layout, including parking provision, would form part of a future reserved matters application should planning permission be granted. Consequently, KCC Highways have no comments to make in respect of these matters at this time.

Personal Injury Collision (PIC) Record

PIC data for the most recently available 5-year period has been sourced and analysed by the applicant. This confirms that 4 collisions occurred during the period in question, all which were slight in severity. These collisions occurred across the agreed area with no clusters identifiable. KCC Highways are therefore satisfied that the proposals will not exacerbate any pre-existing highway safety issues.

Summary and Recommendation

KCC Highways wish to raise a ***holding objection*** to the proposals on the basis that the applicant should be required to provide the following additional information:

- Confirmation of the suitability of the emergency access for development traffic;
- Confirmation of how pedestrian movements from Kings Road to Mote Road would be safely accommodated;

Informative: It is important to note that planning permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

Any changes to or affecting the public highway in Kent require the formal agreement of the Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and it should not be assumed that this will be a given because planning permission has been granted. For this reason, anyone considering works which may affect the public highway, including any highway-owned street furniture, is

advised to engage with KCC Highways and Transportation at an early stage in the design process.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the public highway. Some of this highway land is owned by Kent County Council whilst some is owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have highway rights over the topsoil.

Works on private land may also affect the public highway. These include works to cellars, to retaining walls which support the highway or land above the highway, and to balconies, signs or other structures which project over the highway. Such works also require the approval of the Highway Authority.

Kent County Council has now introduced a formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process.

Should the development be approved by the Planning Authority, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure, before the development is commenced, that all necessary highway approvals and consents have been obtained and that the limits of the highway boundary have been clearly established, since failure to do so may result in enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority. The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under the relevant legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Guidance for applicants, including information about how to clarify the highway boundary and links to application forms for vehicular crossings and other highway matters, may be found on Kent County Council's website: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>. Alternatively, KCC Highways and Transportation may be contacted by telephone: 03000 418181

Yours Faithfully

Director of Highways & Transportation

*This is a statutory technical response on behalf of KCC as Highway Authority. If you wish to make representations in relation to highways matters associated with the planning application under consideration, please make these directly to the Planning Authority.