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Your Ref: 5/2024/2271  
Our Ref: ATE/25/00363/HYB  
Date: 26 March 2025

## Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: St Albans City & District Council

**Application Ref:** 5/2024/2271

**Site Address:** LAND OFF SANDRIDGEBURY LANE AND BETWEEN THE RAILWAY AND, HARPENDEN ROAD, ST ALBANS, AL3 6XT

**Description of development:** : Hybrid planning application comprising:  
(1) Full planning application for the relocation and replacement of existing playing fields and erection of pavilion annex; and  
(2) Outline planning application (access sought) for the construction of up to 1000 new homes (Use Class C3) to include a mix of market housing, affordable housing, age restricted specialist accommodation for the elderly, adult disability service units; a care home (Use Class C2); a local centre (Use Classes E and F); a primary school (Use Class F); the laying out of green infrastructure including habitat creation; drainage infrastructure; earthworks; pedestrian and cycle routes; new means of access and alterations to existing accesses

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

**Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.

### **Key issues**

#### **Trip generation**

The applicant has provided data on trip generation and distribution throughout the day which suggests that 372 cycle trips will be made daily, along with 2471 walking trips and 693 trips by public transport. This significant amount of additional trips provides an excellent opportunity to improve infrastructure in the area to facilitate these. It is further noted that a reasonable amount of trips will be generated by the provision of a primary school and healthcare facilities on site, further underlining the need to ensure that existing residents are able to access these facilities by sustainable modes.

#### **Active travel route audit/pedestrian and cycle access to amenities**

The TA makes a reasonably good attempt to audit nearby routes, though this audit is not always comprehensive (as an example, NCR6 is addressed and pictured, however there is no commentary on its width or surface quality - though the Design and Access statement acknowledges that much of this route is below standard). Routes to key facilities must be carefully considered to ensure that they are

designed in accordance with the standards in LTN 1/20 and can accommodate future walking, wheeling and cycling trips. A more detailed analysis of them would be ideal in order to provide an understanding of the design and deliverability of schemes which are required to embed active travel and ensure that the modal share targets are met. The Level of Service Tool and Junction Assessment Tool in LTN 1/20, and the government's Walking Route Audit Tool, should be used to assess key routes and develop appropriate schemes compliant with current standards. The assessment report should include maps, photos, comments and proposals for schemes where required.

The application includes a local centre including retail and community facilities, healthcare and a two-form entry primary school as well as relocated playing fields and ancillary facilities.

### **Access to public transport**

Access to public transport is reasonable, with frequent buses located with a 15-minute walking distance, though this will be longer for many residents that do not live towards the site boundary. The TA notes that some stops do not benefit from shelters or real time passenger information; there is an opportunity to improve these.

St Albans City and St Albans Abbey stations are around 4km away, a distance that is cycleable depending on the quality of the infrastructure available. This is a key issue, as the existing infrastructure is considered to present a barrier to all but the most confident cyclists.

### **Off-site improvements**

The TA makes reference to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), prepared jointly by Hertfordshire County Council and the District Council which proposes that Harpenden Road will accommodate a series of walking and cycling route interventions to improve active travel to key destinations. It is understood that many of the interventions set out in this LCWIP are intended to be delivered as part of new housing development proposals and this would appear to be an excellent opportunity for this proposal to contribute. At figure 6-3 the applicant provides a map of proposed active travel routes.

The application states that proposed improvements include separate infrastructure for active travel movements and improvements to Ancient Briton junction and King William IV junction. Indicative drawings have been provided for proposed junction improvements which ATE understands have been developed in line with LHA requirements, though information on what exactly is proposed in terms of separate infrastructure for active travel is vague. ATE therefore requires information on exactly what separate infrastructure for active travel is proposed, given that the existing lack of active travel infrastructure will present a significant barrier (considering the existing hostile environment on Harpenden road), and confirmation that the LHA and LPA are content with the method proposed to secure and deliver this. This element is considered key in ensuring that future residents are enabled to use active travel (and therefore fulfilling the applicants' vision), as well as enabling existing residents to access the facilities proposed within this development such as the primary school and healthcare.

The TA sets out that a number of pedestrian and cycle links between previously consented Sewell Park (Hunston Properties development) and the application site are intended to be provided as part of a previous planning permission; these were identified as part of the wider North St Albans Broad Location in order to provide permeability between both parcels of land. The site access proposals incorporate protected active travel infrastructure along the site access arm and along Harpenden Road to the south connecting to the committed facilities being delivered as part of the off-site mitigation by the adjacent Sewell Park. To the north of the proposed junction, active travel infrastructure will be provided to the existing Old Albanians Sports Ground access. *The proposals will allow for the future delivery of high-quality active travel infrastructure along National Cycle Route 6 to Harpenden as proposed within the LCWIP. Traffic signal-controlled active travel crossings of Harpenden Road and the site access will be incorporated within the traffic signal control at the junction.* This link is considered essential (in addition to the need for further infrastructure providing a connection to St Albans) and therefore ATE requires further information on this element, given that there is no legal link between the consented Sewell Park and the application site. ATE needs to understand the likelihood of this element being delivered and the proposed plan for providing residents with safe and high quality infrastructure should this element not come forward.

ATE also requires confirmation as to how it is proposed to link the proposed Harpenden Road access to the Sewell Park proposed off-site improvements

The TA states that *Sandridgebury Lane extends through the application site connecting Harpenden Road and Sandridge. It is proposed that, within the application site, a new route is provided between Harpenden Road and Sandridgebury Lane. The main section of Sandridgebury Lane within the site would then be converted into use as a green lane and limited to walking and cycling only. Vehicular access along the central part of Sandridgebury Lane would be restricted by the introduction of a modal filter, with provisions to monitoring future traffic levels against which further management measures could be introduced. A modal filter is also proposed at Valley Road to limit its use to pedestrian and cyclists.* The TA sets out that these principles, shown on drawings 05920-SK-008-P1, 05920-SK-006-P2 and 05920-SK-010-P2 have been discussed and agreed with Hertfordshire County Council. ATE is supportive of this element subject to the agreement of the LHA that this is deliverable and has been secured by a mechanism acceptable to the LPA and LHA.

The TA outlines a new footpath and cycleway proposed to extend from Sandridgebury Lane (St Albans City 096) to the Hertfordshire Way (Sandridge 009). This would be a recreational route to provide access to the countryside footpath network to the north the application site and Heartwood Forest. ATE is supportive of this element subject to agreement that it will be designed in line with the principles set out in LTN 1/20.

The TA sets out that it is proposed that the existing bus stops to the north and south of the site access are consolidated into a single pair of bus stops close to the site access junction. These will incorporate bus shelters and raised boarding platforms and will replace the existing poles. The primary road enables a bus route to be formed between Harpenden Road and the local centre. This will facilitate the potential extension of service 653 (Tigermoth) into the development. ATE is content with this element subject to the agreement of the LHA that it is feasible and deliverable.

### **Site permeability and connectivity**

The design and access statement sets out that the development will be formed around a dense network of routes and connections that prioritise active travel. ATE would expect that all access points are designed to comply with the requirements of LTN 1/20 in terms of width, surface type and lighting, and ensure accessibility for those using wheelchairs or adapted cycles or trailers if necessary. The DAS makes reference to LTN 1/20, the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, which is welcome. The applicant has stated that *low speeds will be encouraged with a maximum of 20mph design speed across the site. Active travel movements will be supported through appropriate levels of infrastructure in line with guidance and standards with priority given to the movement of people over vehicles.* This is welcome and ATE requires a firm commitment to be provided to this element in order to ensure that detailed designs that come forward at reserved matters stage are compliant. This should be secured via a method acceptable to the LPA, such as the requirement for a Design Code by way of a condition.

### **Cycle parking**

The TA states that cycle parking is proposed in excess of the draft Parking Standards in the emerging local plan, with an aspiration for at least one cycle space per bedroom for the residential uses to be provided in a safe and suitable location. Note that it is also expected that cycle parking for non-residential uses such as the school will also be provided. For employees within the proposed development, ATE would expect both secure cycle parking and trip-end facilities to be provided. Facilities such as lockers and showers are considered essential for employees in order to enable them to reach their place of employment using active travel.

### **Travel plan**

A framework travel plan has been submitted as part of the application, which references the national target for 50% of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked and cycled.

It is expected that the travel plan should outline ambitious mode share targets and measures to embed active travel alongside appropriate monitoring and remedial strategies. Any final document should do so taking into consideration of the national target that half of all journeys in towns and cities shall be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. The final document should also provide sufficient detail on the active travel and public transport infrastructure to be provided or improved both onsite and offsite and include detail on how its use will be embedded by initiatives and incentives to be secured through planning obligations and conditions. It should also include details of effective and influential actions to be taken if targets are not met, with the intention for these to be secured and monitored (if triggered) through planning conditions and obligations. The submitted travel plan contains no positive targets to active travel mode shift, instead focusing on reductions in single-occupancy car use. To be effectively and positively

targeted, similar targets for active travel should be added. With regard to the fact that the proposed school in particular will require its own travel plan, it would benefit in developing shared vision with the wider school community and include certainty in its measures. Parents will lead the transportation methods of children and must be actively engaged in this process, and may also greatly benefit specific measures such as adult cycle training targeted at them, as teachers will be likely to benefit in the same way.

### **Next steps**

While the location of the proposal has strong potential to be of benefit for active travel, and the applicant has laudable ambitions in terms of its vision for modal shift, it is essential that the necessary infrastructure is put in place to enable future residents, employees and visitors to have the choice to use active travel modes from the outset of the development. Currently, exactly what is proposed in this respect (and when and how it may come forward) is unclear. Before it is able to recommend approval of this application, ATE considers the main issues of particular importance to be:

- **Providing further details of off-site infrastructure improvements proposed in order to ensure these are feasible and deliverable, the mechanism proposed to deliver these, and whether this is considered adequate in the view of the LHA**
- **Providing a commitment to the principle of ensuring active travel infrastructure within the site is designed to a high standard and in line with LTN 1/20**

ATE considers that this will be essential in order to meet the pledges made by the applicant to deliver a sustainable development for all members of the community through ensuring that future residents and visitors to this development benefit from sufficiently safe and convenient linkage to surrounding amenities by walking, wheeling and cycling as an integral part of the wider network.

These recommendations should be provided to the LPA case officer and forwarded to the agent and applicant. ATE would be content to review further submitted information to help address the above identified deficits with a view to providing a further response and recommended wording for planning conditions and obligations.