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Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)

Director of Planning

St Albans City & District Council
St Peters Street
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL1 3JE

District ref: 5/2020/1992
HCC ref: SA/3554/2020
HCC received: 25 September 2020
Area manager: Alan Story
Case officer: Alan Story

Location

ROUND HOUSE FARM BULLENS GREEN LANE COLNEY HEATH ST. ALBANS AL4 0FU

Application type

Outline

Proposal

Outline application (access sought) - Construction of up to 100 dwellings together with all ancillary works

Decision

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1) Insufficient information is provided that the impacts of development shall not have a severe impact on the wider operation of the network, contrary to Hertfordshire County Councils LTP4 Policy 5 (Development Management)
- 2) Insufficient information is provided to demonstrate that necessary changes to local speed limits are achievable, in accordance with Hertfordshire County Councils LTP4 Policy 15 (Speed Management)
- 3) Visibility from the access, without speed limit changes is insufficient. The proposed access shall be prejudicial to the safety of users of the highway contrary to Hertfordshire County Councils LTP4 Policy 5 (Development Management)

Comments:

The Highway Authority would confirm that the applicant has undertaken pre-application discussion in advance of this application. At such pre-application time proposals included the formation of access

to the site by way of a priority junction to Fellowes Lane, however the submitted scheme now proposes a similar but alternate arrangement to Bullens Green Lane. Bullens Green Lane is a Local Access Road within the hierarchy of Hertfordshire roads. Vehicle speeds past the proposed site access are 60mph limit.

The Application is submitted accompanied by a Transport Assessment, Woods Hardwick August 2020.

Whilst pre-application advice, and the general conclusions of the Transport Assessment are that, in principle the HA are satisfied with the principle of development, it is important to clarify that the Transport Assessment conclusions (by its' own recognition) are incomplete. The Highway Authority has identified junctions for assessment to ensure transport impacts are not severe. Such assessment is not yet available, and shall be predicated on traffic counts yet to be undertaken.

Development proposals require the change of speed limit to 30mph, and as a minimum would require limits to be changed to a maximum of 40mph to suit the visibility splays shown as able to be provided within land within applicants control and / or highway. The County Council sets out its' approach to speed management within its' Speed Management Strategy. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/transport-planning/local-transport-plan-live/speed-management-strategy.pdf>

Critically, the application provides no evidence that the proposed speed limit change is in accordance with these provisions. No speed survey data is available for Bullens Green Lane to evidence that the proposed change in speed limit is achievable, nor are any measures to introduce appropriate restrictions on speed proposed. Further, there is limited evidence within the Masterplan to the site that the frontage to Bullens Green Lane shall be in accordance with the Speed Management Strategy. All development is well screened with no active frontage to Bullens Green Lane, contrary to the SMS – the introduction of a speed limit roundel alone will do little to communicate to a driver on this route that the environment is an urban area.

The failure to provide a scheme and evidence to enable the Hertfordshire Speed Management Group (involving members of the Police and the Highway Authority) prevents any confirmation of acceptance of speed limit changes. Retention of existing limits (60m) means that the proposed access is not provided with adequate visibility, and shall therefore be contrary to LTP4 Policy 5 (Development Management).

Speed surveys, as well as a change to the masterplan principles to fundamentally change Bullens Green Lane at this location shall be required in order for the HA and Police to consider changes to limits, alternatively visibility compliant with DMRB standards shall be required for the proposed access, which is presently not the case. On the above basis the HA cannot approve or support the proposed access.

Whilst the masterplan (Appendix 2 of the TA) does identify opportunities for links between the site and the adjacent footway, and would therefore be reasonably addressed under Reserved Matters, the proposals do not propose any footway adjacent to carriageway, and are instead screened within the site. For such reasons, I repeat that the necessary speed limit change is unlikely to succeed.

The trip rates for the proposed development, derived through TRICS appear acceptable and an acceptance of the scoped junction capacity assessments is reasonable. These shall need to be conducted, as well as opportunities at such junctions and approaches to the site identify the means by which adequate footways to an acceptable standard (2m) may be delivered in order that the development is safety accessible by pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. There shall be a need, wherever footway availability (and constraints) require pedestrian movement from opposite sides of carriageway to identify opportunities for safe crossing points (minimum dropped kerb with tactile provision to enable for safe crossing points (minimum dropped kerb with tactile provision).

The access in itself (provided at 5.5m carriageway width) is acceptable to the HA, but should be provided with swept path details to identify adequacy of radii given the width of Bullens Green Lane. Given that the level of use of Bullens Green Lane is significantly intensified by the now proposed sole means of access from this point, the adequacy of Bullens Green Lane for its' length (4.8m minimum shall need to be assessed with any localised widening delivered through off-site highway improvements.

Subject to adequate provision of footways internal to the site, and appropriate linkages to the adjacent network with improvements, the HA would confirm that the principle of development is acceptable, recognising that whilst Colney Heath is not highly sustainable there are local bus stops and facilities, and that proposals may support greater viability of bus services as an alternative to private car use.

Any scheme found to be acceptable would be required to provide appropriate schemes locally (A414 Corridor) to improve conditions for all road users.

The application is submitted supported by a residential travel plan, necessary by consideration of the provisions of the NPPF and the Highway Authorities own standards.

There are some minor deficiencies in the Travel Plan as submitted, but I am satisfied that these can be adequately resolved through the necessary s106 clauses.

The Highway Authority cannot support the application in its' present form as insufficient information is submitted in respect of the adequacy of the access, visibility from the access, impact on local highway conditions. Subject to the provision of the above information, confirmed by the TA as to be provided in annex form -and informed by the above confirmations – I shall be happy to review and provide a revised response.

Signed
Alan Story

15 October 2020