

APPEAL REF: APP/B1930/W/22/3313110

Land South of Chiswell Green Lane, Chiswell Green, St Albans

(LPA ref: 5/2022/0927)

APPEAL REF: APP/B1930/W/22/3312277

Land North of Chiswell Green Lane, Chiswell Green, St Albans

(LPA ref: 5/2021/3194)

Summary Proof of Evidence

of

David Walpole BSc(Hons) CivEng MCIHT

on behalf of

Keep Chiswell Green

March 2023

(Ver 1.0)

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1 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 My name is David Walpole, and I am a partner at THaT Consultancy.
- 1.2 I have a Bachelor of Science degree with Honours in Civil Engineering from the University of Nottingham. I am a Member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT).
- 1.3 I have been actively involved in providing transport and highway advice relating to the development planning process since the mid-1980s. I have advised a wide variety of clients in both the public and private sectors
- 1.4 My evidence for these Appeals has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional body and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.
- 1.5 I am familiar with the appeal proposals having first been instructed by Keep Chiswell Green (KCG) in October 2022 to review what are now the appeal applications.

2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 My evidence focuses on the transport and highway aspects of the appeal proposals.

2.2 I address the fundamental transport requirements of the Framework (CD 7.1), including:

- Do the appeal sites represent sustainable locations in transport terms and provide a genuine choice of transport modes? (Framework, para 105)
- Will the appeal proposals have an unacceptable impact on highway safety? (Framework, para 111)
- Will the residual cumulative impacts on the road network be severe? (Framework, para 111)

2.3 At the application stage both appellants submitted detailed transport assessments in support of their individual development schemes. As far as I am aware no attempt was, or has, been made to evaluate the cumulative transport and highway impacts should both schemes be granted permission.

2.4 Both appellants have offered sustainable transport measures (i.e. improved walking/cycling infrastructure and bus subsidies) to mitigate the significant transport and highway impacts of the proposed developments. Despite both appellants predicting serious capacity and queueing problems at the double mini roundabout in Chiswell Green neither appellant has proposed any form of off-site highway capacity improvements.

2.5 I therefore consider whether or not the appeal proposals and proposed mitigation measures will:

- create developments where sustainable modes of travel are the first choice for journeys; and
- effectively mitigate the significant capacity and congestion impacts that the developments are forecast to have on the transport network.

3 SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 In Section 3 of my main proof of evidence I set out the transport policy and guidance background against which the appeal proposals should be evaluated.
- 3.2 In Section 4 I consider whether or not the appeal sites represent sustainable locations in transport terms where sustainable travel (i.e. walking, cycling and public transport) will be the first choice for journeys by new residents. I conclude that both sites represent unsustainable locations which would not provide a genuine choice of transport modes for new residents. Inevitably both appeal proposals would create car-based developments where new residents would have to drive to meet their day-to-day needs.
- 3.3 In Section 5 I analyse the appellants' trip forecasts and travel plan targets.
- 3.4 In Section 6 I evaluate the impact that development generated traffic will have on the double mini roundabout in the middle of the village. I explain that because Watford Road is the busiest B-Road in Hertfordshire, and the 17th busiest road overall, it is vitally important that the development proposals do not exacerbate the existing problems at this junction.
- 3.5 I find that even though their traffic flow data and computer modelling methodologies differ both appellants reached the same fundamental conclusion. This being that the double mini roundabout junction is operating at, or close to, capacity at present and will be over capacity in 2026/7. Once development generated traffic is taken into account from either one of the proposed developments then the situation deteriorates quickly, and queues and delays increase dramatically.
- 3.6 The cumulative impact should both developments receive planning permission has not been considered by either applicant.
- 3.7 It is clear from the information submitted that the proposed travel plan commitments will make no significant difference to the operation of the double mini roundabout. This is a point explicitly acknowledged by the appellant in respect of the southern site.
- 3.8 It is clear therefore that the proposed transport mitigation measures will be ineffective and will not mitigate the significant traffic impacts that the developments will have.

3.9 In Section 7 I present my assessment of the other highway and transport issues raised by the appeal proposals. I consider:

- the need to assess the cumulative impact of both developments.
- the impact that the proposed developments and associated highway works on Chiswell Green Lane will have in terms of highway safety, convenience and amenity. I conclude that the appeal proposals are unsatisfactory.
- The proposal to provide improved facilities for cyclists on Watford Road between Chiswell Green Lane and The Noke roundabout. These proposals form a major part of the mitigation measures promoted by the southern site. The appellant has offered to contribute towards the cost of this LHA scheme. I explain that the LHA (this being the County Council) has confirmed that these proposals are at an “early/concept stage”. There is therefore no certainty that these proposals will be implemented, and if they are implemented then what form they might take. I document some of the problems I have identified with the illustrative scheme submitted by the appellants.

3.10 In Section 8 I review both appeal proposals against the policy background that I documented previously in Section 3. I conclude that both appeals conflict with all the national and local policies presented in Section 3.

3.11 Finally, in Section 9 I present my conclusions. These are reproduced in full in the next section of this summary proof of evidence.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions as presented in Section 9 of my main proof of evidence are reproduced below in paragraphs 4.1-4.4.

4.1 I have reviewed the highways and transport aspects of the two appeal applications against current policy, best practice standards and guidance. My investigations lead me to conclude that:

- The local highway network, and particularly the double mini roundabout in the centre of the village, is operating at capacity at present. The additional traffic arising from either one, or both, of the proposed developments will lead to a significant worsening of the situation.
- Both applicants, and the LHA (local highway authority), have ignored the significant traffic impact and instead focussed on providing improved provision for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users in an attempt to mitigate the transport impacts of the proposed developments.
- I consider that a more balanced approach is needed that merges highway improvements (ie junction improvements) with increased provision to support sustainable modes of travel.
- I think it is unrealistic to expect sustainable transport initiatives on their own to satisfactorily overcome the major transport impacts arising from these developments in an area where the car is, and will remain, the primary mode of transport for most people, most of the time.
- I note that in the 2011 census only 14 (1%) people living in Chiswell Green travelled to work by cycle, only 2% travelled by bus and only 5% walked. In the 2021 census (which was affected by the pandemic) only 11 people (0.7%) cycled to work. 15 (0.9%) people travelled to work by bus and 4% of residents walked to work. Clearly sustainable modes of travel are not realistic options in this area.

- It is clear from all the information submitted with the two planning applications that both appeal sites represent unsustainable locations in transport terms.
- The sites only have access on foot to a limited range of services and facilities. Again this is primarily because the two sites are located in open countryside beyond the urban area.
- The sites have relatively poor cycle access despite the proposed new cycle lanes to be provided along Watford Road.
- The sites have poor access to the bus network primarily because the distance residents will have to walk to their closest bus stop is excessive.
- These factors when taken together mean that there is unlikely to be a genuine choice of transport modes available to the new residents.
- If permitted then the developments would lead to the creation of car-based dormitory communities.
- The proposal to fund more frequent bus services along Watford Road for a period of 5 years is a highway benefit. Whether or not these services remain financially viable once the funding runs out is uncertain, particularly given the low level of patronage demonstrated in the two most recent censuses.
- The proposed developments (either individually or collectively) will exacerbate the already serious highway safety and capacity concerns on the local highway network and particularly at the Watford Road/Chiswell Green Lane/Tippendell Road double mini roundabout junction.
- The additional traffic arising from the proposed developments will change the function and character of Chiswell Green Lane from that of a “street” to a “road” with an emphasis on its traffic carrying capabilities rather than its place function.
- The proposal to provide a 3 m wide shared pedestrian and cycleway along Chiswell Green Lane as the main access to the northern appeal site, and the

northern part of the southern site (which includes the proposed school) is wholly inadequate. The situation created will be dangerous and inconvenient and will not be effective in achieving the shift away from private car usage that is being sought.

- 4.2 The development proposals are therefore contrary to local and national policy that seeks to create safe, attractive sustainable communities where the overall need to travel is reduced and where residents have a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 4.3 The proposed developments will provide highway benefits by way of the improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities in the village (assuming that these can be delivered) and by funding an increased bus frequency along Watford Road for 5 years.
- 4.4 However, the serious transport and highway issues must override any benefits arising from the provision of housing and the sustainable transport initiatives.
- 4.5 This being the case both appeals should be dismissed on transport and highway grounds.