

Note / Memo

**HaskoningDHV UK Ltd.
Transport & Planning**

To: North Hertfordshire District Council
From: Phil Marshall
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Copy:
Our reference: PC1534-RHD-NT-0001-NT-0002
Classification: Project related
Checked by: Phil Marshall

Subject: Planning Application Ref: 20/00744/OP - Review of Gladman Response

Introduction

Royal HaskoningDHV (RHDHV) has been appointed to provide transport and highways advice to Royston Says No To Gladman. Gladman has submitted an outline planning application to North Hertfordshire District Council (Ref: 20/00744/OP) for proposed residential development of up to 99 dwellings on land off Echo Hill, Royston (the site).

The planning application submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council (Ref: 20/00744/OP) is supported by way of a Transport Assessment (TA), produced by Ashley Helme Associates (AMA). RHDHV submitted a response to the TA on behalf of Royston Says No To Gladman to North Hertfordshire District Council on 22 July 2020. The response highlighted technical weaknesses within the TA, including:

- The fundamentally unsustainable location of the site;
- The constrained access route to the local primary school;
- The undeliverable proposed site access; and
- The constrained nature of the highway network in Echo Hill, Sun Hill and Briary Lane.

RHDHV note that Hertfordshire County Council Highways (HCC) provided a consultation response which recommended refusal on various themes, broadly in line with those set out above.

AMA has subsequently produced a response to the highways comments raised, which has been obtained by Royston Says No To Gladman, (ref 20 09 19 AHA Response to objections 01546281.pdf).

This note has been produced to highlight the outstanding technical weaknesses regarding the development proposals for the site. For convenience it deals with each issue in a similar order to those by AMA.

Response to AMA

Bus Stop Distance

To resolve the site being at over 1km from the nearest bus stop, AMA suggest making a financial contribution to replace an existing bus with a low emissions bus on route 16. Whilst this suggestion may contribute to improving air quality along route 16, it would not mitigate any transport issue for the site. In any event it would be expected that the existing bus must meet all existing emissions standards. Were emission standards to become more stringent then the operator would be obliged to upgrade the vehicle

to meet the revised standards, irrespective of the proposed development. So the need for a contribution on air quality grounds is also disputed.

Replacing an existing bus will not make the site within an acceptable distance of a bus stop, nor would it improve journey times or increase the low frequency of route 16. It is naïve to suggest that any occupant of the site would walk over a kilometre to then wait for a bus running at 30 minute frequency. As such the proposal does not mitigate the issue with the development's distance from bus stops.

The situations where a section 106 contribution can be sought are set out in paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

"56. Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
- (b) directly related to the development; and*
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development."*

It is apparent that provision of a replacement bus would fail the tests of paragraph 56 and thus is not an appropriate measure.

Assessing Sustainability

The statement at 3.2.3 that *"walk distance to bus services is only one strand of sustainability that should be weighed in the balance with other aspects"* is noted. However the site is demonstrably a long walk from any facilities, and the gradient of the route would discourage users further. Comparing against other sites does not reduce the distance to facilities and hence does not resolve the issues that would be faced by potential residents trying to sustainably access any facilities.

Range of Bus Services

It is noted that AMA acknowledge that both comparison sites have access to a bus service within 400m. Stating that the Gladman site is better because it has access to all bus services is disingenuous, given all the services are over 1km away.

Access Road

The comments that 87% of the access route has Major Access Road characteristics are disingenuous, given that this only considers Echo Hill, whereas Sun Hill beyond is substandard (4.9 to 3.2m wide), with narrow footpaths.

It is frustrating that it is only post submission that AMA has provided swept path assessments, given it is standard industry practice. It is noted that the commentary states the junction could operate without compromising pedestrian safety or damaging verges. Again this is disingenuous, given the demonstrable issues with vehicular tracking and hence safety:

- The tracking shows a generic 11.2m vehicle, rather than the 12.1m Mercedes Dennis Econic requested by HCC. The larger vehicle would be less manoeuvrable and thus the drawings provided do not present a robust assessment.
- All manoeuvres shown result in the refuse vehicle overrunning the opposing half of the carriageway, stopping two way operation;

- A refuse vehicle entering the site from the east would restrict egress by vehicle for the whole manoeuvre shown.
- A refuse vehicle entering the site from the west would restrict egress by vehicle for the whole manoeuvre shown, and track almost to the western kerb.
- A refuse vehicle egressing the site to the east would restrict entry by vehicle for nearly the whole manoeuvre shown, and track almost to the eastern kerb.
- A refuse vehicle egressing the site to the west would restrict entry by vehicle for nearly the whole manoeuvre shown, and track almost to the eastern kerb.
- None of the tracking takes account of parked vehicles.

Gradients

Again, the response provided by AMA is disingenuous. HCC as Highway Authority has been quite clear that the access has not been designed to gradients they would accept for any new carriageway construction. The discussion regarding Briary Lane is irrelevant given that proposal related to an existing route that was proposed to be upgraded.

The current drawing shows a 1 in 30 gradient for the first 10m of the site access, rather than the 12m set out in the Roads in Herts Design Guide. A transition curve is then presented, which has an average gradient of 6.7% which is in excess of the maximum gradient expected of 5%. The remaining access road is then shown at 1 in 10 (10%), twice the maximum gradient. The only caveat to the 5% maximum is for short lengths at the ends of culs de sac, not for the sole vehicular and main pedestrian access to a large development.

As such the access road is inadequate and would not be acceptable to the Highway Authority. One consequence of resolving the gradient issue is that the resulting road would have to cut deeper into the No.24 plot, so the proposed retaining structures would be deeper, and have to come further north, closer to the adjacent properties. A further issue is whether it would be possible to create an acceptable network of streets within the site at a 5% gradient.

Parked Vehicle Obstructions

Whilst the intent to fund a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is noted, TROs are subject to a separate statutory consultation, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed.

Retaining Walls

Whilst RHDHV has not been appointed to advise on structural engineering issues, it is apparent that the currently proposed retaining structures are not deliverable, given the small distances to the boundaries of adjacent properties. It is noted that the 1.083m distance quoted to the boundary of no. 23 is from the centreline of the pile, so the safe working distance from the boundary would reduce further. No dimension is shown for the piles, but it is expected that taking that into account would reduce the safe working distance below 1m.

A quick internet search found: <https://www.rockal.com/downloads/workingplatformcertificate.pdf>, which at Para 2.4 of page 3 states:

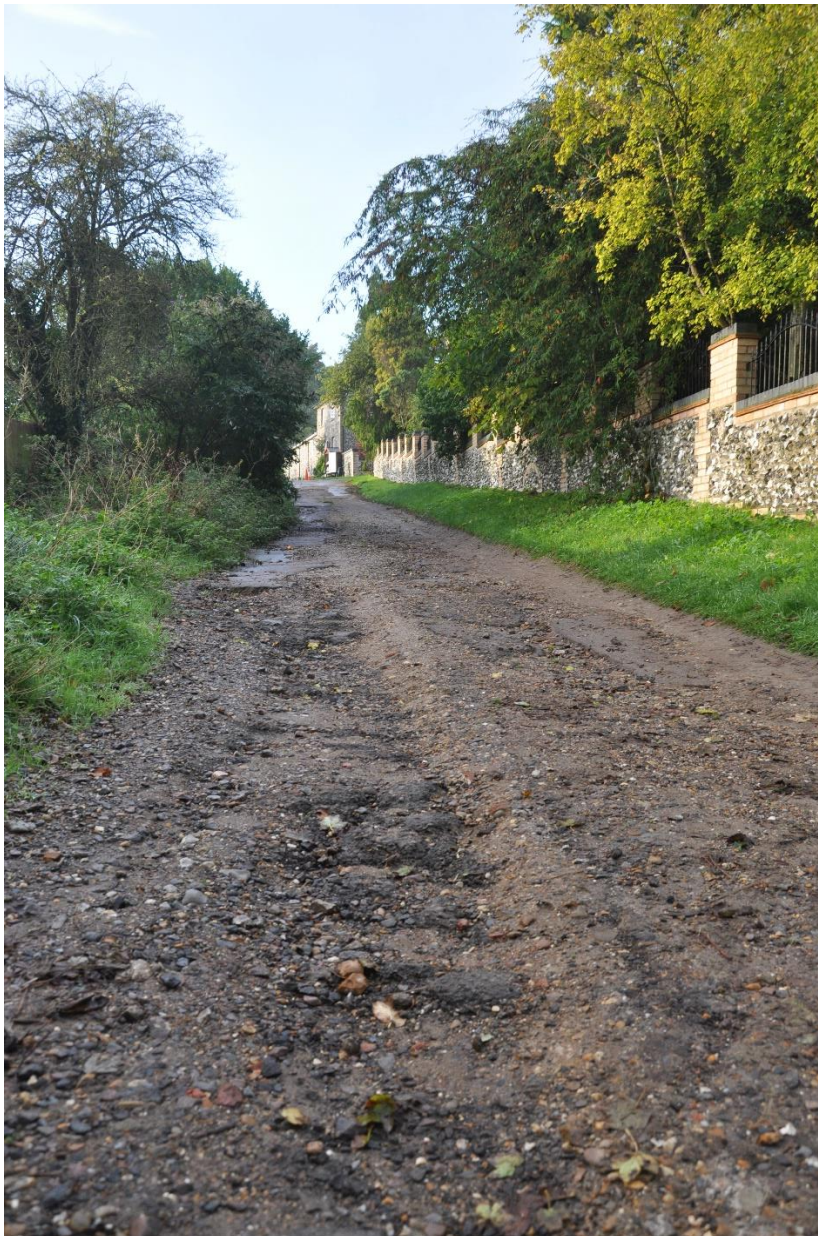
“Poor definition of the edge of the working platform is a major cause of tracked plant instability. It is good practice that the working platform should extend at least 2m beyond the pile position/edge of the building to ensure sufficient safe working area for the specialists personnel and attendant plant. Where having to

This is a fundamental issue in terms of deliverability, as the owner of no. 23 opposes the scheme, and also procedure. The owner of no.23 has not been formally notified as a landowner regarding the planning proposals for their land.

Bridleway 13

It is also noted that the applicant has removed the intent to use Bridleway BW R013 as a secondary vehicular point. However walking and cycling access is still proposed. The bridleway is poorly surfaced, unlit and would not meet current design standards, especially in terms of permissible gradients for access by the mobility impaired. The condition of the Bridleway continues to deteriorate; see Insert 2.

Insert 2 – Bridleway 13



No drawings have been provided to demonstrate that the applicant could suitably improve the Bridleway. Furthermore it is unclear whether the applicant has the right to make any improvements, as the Conservators have objected to the development:

“The proposed ‘pedestrian route to amenities’ (see Transport Assessment p155) is routed across rough ground which seasonally is given to tall grass, wildflowers and nettles. Our management of this space does not recognise the need for such a footpath given there is an adjacent unmade bridleway and we will not be introducing tactile paving or maintaining a path suitable for all users (including those less able) across the nature reserve.” From Page 2 of The Conservators of Therfield Heath and Greens Objection to NHDC Planning Application 20/00744/OP.

Conclusion

Whilst it is acknowledged the applicant has responded to a number of the issues raised by HCC and RHDHV, much of the supplementary information provided is disingenuous, and does not resolve the issues previously raised.

The issue regarding the land ownership of no.23 Echo Hill is a further fundamental issue that has arisen, which would require a further redesign of the submitted plans.

The planning application should thus be refused on highway and transport grounds, namely:

- The fundamentally unsustainable location of the site;
- The constrained access route to the local primary school;
- The undeliverable proposed site access; and
- The constrained nature of the highway network in Echo Hill, Sun Hill and Briary Lane.

Based on these issues, the site must be judged to be contrary to paragraphs 108, 109 and 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework.