

3/13/0075/OP: Bishop's Stortford North

Meeting to review the western access Note of the Meeting

19:00 Wed 18 December 2013

Council Chamber, Wallfields

In attendance: Councillor Rose Cheswright, Chairman
Councillor Malcolm Alexander
Councillor Ted Bedford
Councillor Stan Bull
Councillor Mike Carver
Councillor Gary Jones
Councillor Pat Moore
Councillor Mike Newman
Councillor David Andrews
Councillor Graham Lawrence
Councillor Graham McAndrew

Kevin Steptoe (KS)	EHDC Head of Planning & Building Control
Stephen Tapper (ST)	EHDC Lead Officer for BSN
Vetti Vettivelu (VV)	HCC Highways
Karl FitzGerald (KF)	HCA Advisory Team for Large Applications
Bob Rivers (BR)	Bovis Homes, BSN Consortium
David Barnes	Director, Star Planning
Ian Dimbylow (ID)	Associate Director, WSP – transport
Steve Biart	Fairfield Partnership
David Banfield	Persimmon Homes

Apologies from Councillors Boulton, Jeff Jones, Symonds, Page, Warnell, Williamson and Wood.

Agenda

- 1 Introductions - Chairman
- 2 The DMC resolution – the purpose & scope of the review – KS – with Member input and discussion to ensure that the scope covers the requirements of the committee.

The resolution of the committee was:

RESOLVED – that, in respect of application 3/13/0075/OP, planning permission be deferred to enable Officers, in association with local Members, Herts County Highways Officers, and the

applicants, to undertake detailed consideration and investigation of alternative access arrangements relating to the proposed western neighbourhood (Phase 1). These alternative access arrangements should not comprise the existing roundabout onto Hadham Road.

- 3 Presentation re work to date – Consortium / HCC
- 4 Discussion, including any other options
- 5 Next steps - summary note and information to be published to the website and reporting back to the committee

Notes of the meeting

There was an introduction from Kevin Steptoe setting out that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the possible options for access to the western neighbourhood of the proposed development at Bishop's Stortford north. This followed the deferral of the matter from the DM committee meeting of 5 December 2013 and was to fulfill the requirements of the committee.

Mr Steptoe confirmed that this meeting was not a formal meeting of the committee and that the outcome of this meeting would be reported back to the committee when it next met to consider this matter. In its resolution the committee had invited other Members to be present, including other Members of Bishop's Stortford and other wards which might be affected by the impact of amended access arrangements.

Qu. from Cllr McAndrew: is the deferral only for this matter or will all matters be considered at Committee next time? Ans: at the 5 December 2013 meeting Members had considered the submitted report and all issues fully. Whilst there had been a proposal to refuse permission for the scheme, this had not been carried by the committee. The focus of debate now then should be the matter on which a deferral was resolved only unless there was substantive new information to consider in relation to other issues.

Mr B Rivers introduced matters on behalf of the consortium. He explained that other options were explored earlier and more could have been said about them at the committee meeting had the consortium been able to respond to the debate. The consortium is disappointed that a decision has not been reached and it has considered submitting a planning appeal. However, the consortium accepts the committee needs more explanation and therefore an appeal has not been lodged yet.

Mr Ian Dimbelow described the options tested prior to settling on the current proposal:

He explained that the master planning study by Roger Evans - 2005 - covered the options of fifth arm of the existing Tesco roundabout and a further A120 roundabout - recommended further detailed study.

Detailed study by Steer Davies Gleave in 2006 - agreed a Hadham Road access solution was right.

The applicants therefore followed this lead.

Notes from the pre-application public consultation show there were some comments on access arrangements. These were taken into account by the consortium in formulating their proposals. Those comments did not identify options that were not already being considered.

He explained that the considerations in examining options include the following:

1. Design standards
2. Safety
3. Policy eg re accesses on A120 as the primary route
4. Others: cost, landownership, construction disruption

The transport consultants drew up options and consulted HCC (as highway authority):

1 Fifth arm off an elliptical roundabout – shortcoming is that this does not give enough room for compliance with design standards, particularly in respect of being capable of providing adequate weaving distance between entries and exits

2 Fifth arm on enlarged circular roundabout: from 90m to 100m. However this exceeds design standards which confirm that larger roundabouts lead to greater circulatory speeds and more accidents.

3 Secondary roundabout next to existing properties and closer the existing Tesco roundabout than currently proposed. This distance between the two roundabouts would be limited with potential for queues blocking back from one junction to another.

4 Staggered T junction with one arm into the site and Hadham Grove comprising the other – this would be unsuitable for the amount of traffic generated.

5 Roundabout to east of Hadham Grove (2005 application scheme by Bovis and Taylor Wimpey) – this was considered unsuitable because it was cramped because of land ownership constraints and as Hadham Grove was provided with a priority junction access close to the roundabout.

6 Once the Consortium acquired the second property on Hadham Road they could relocate the roundabout and give Hadham Grove its own arm.

Noise and air quality were dealt with in the Environmental Assessment.

Councillors' were invited to raise questions and seek further information:

Cllr Carver: If Little Hadham by pass is built, could it have a connection to the A120 east of the existing roundabout so that a fifth arm can then be introduced safely because it is divorced from the A120.

Ans: (currently proposals show that the by pass will join the A120 to the west of the Tesco roundabout) - either way the fifth arm still unacceptable because it would remain an unsafe arrangement. A different arrangement, a new roundabout on the A120, would create an outwards facing development that won't integrate well with the rest of the town. Also, the routes into BSN would be longer, including bus routes.

Cllr Andrews: Can the existing roundabout be stretched eastwards to give more space for a fifth arm? There are plenty of examples of odd shaped, sub standard roundabouts elsewhere.

Ans: Whilst there are existing examples, new development should meet current design standards

VV gave examples in St Albans and Watford where they are such roundabouts, but experience has shown these to be dangerous. Bigger roundabouts encourage speed and are therefore less safe.

Cllr Andrew: Are in and out slip roads off the A120 feasible?

Ans: not a safe solution because they would encourage drivers to illegally cross the carriageway – therefore only OK with dual carriageway.

Cllr Newman There are many examples of five arms and the developers must be able to find one that fits this situation. The majority of BSN traffic does not want to go into town but will use the A120.

In association with this a bus only access off Hadham Road could be implemented as is the case in Thorley?

We must strive to find an alternative in the interests of local residents.

ID Existing five arm roundabouts are older and standards now rule them out - would store up trouble for the future. Need to also factor in that, without a roundabout as proposed, Hadham Grove residents would find it difficult to access Hadham Road travelling east (toward town).

Modelling shows that one third of peak traffic from the site will travel along Hadham Road, into the town ie 100 cars approx in peak. Agreed that necessary to strive for best solution but that technical and policy constraints could not be set aside.

VV There are many sub-standard roundabouts because they were built in the past. However, given this is a primary route roundabout, there is no good reason to compromise the standards.

BR Consider that the main test is not what residents find most acceptable, but should be what is safe and appropriate.

Whilst the views and concerns of the Hadham Grove residents are acknowledged, they are not necessarily the view of all residents of the town and were not raised by the Town Council.

ID ran a video of the Paramics model output for the meeting to view. This peak hour version is with the full development in place and with no allowance for modal shift as a result of Smarter Choices. As such, it represents a “worst case” scenario for junction operation. There was no appreciable queuing at the proposed Hadham Road roundabout on any arm, and the effect of the pedestrian crossing was minimal.

Cllr Cheswright: Would traffic lights improve the five arm option?

Ans: Because of the closeness of the arms if a fifth is introduced, this arrangement provides no stacking space between the arms. (There is less than 90 degrees of the circle for three arms). The roundabout would not operate effectively therefore if lights were introduced.

Cllr Carver: Could the roundabout be realigned to enable stacking space to be incorporated?

Ans: This would be a significant cost option and, in the absence of a technical objection to the proposed access solution, which is cost effective, it is not necessary to pursue this.

VV HCC could acquire land for realignment through compulsory purchase, but the developer cannot and has come up with a suitable scheme within land currently controlled. (HCC could not justify compulsory purchase if there is no currently suitable access arrangement).

Cllr Carver: The delivery of Little Hadham by pass would significantly support the sustainability of the development.

KS Timing of the construction of the bypass is uncertain, and EHDC has no policy to link the development of BSN to the delivery of the by pass.

ID Whilst the benefits of the Little Hadham by pass are acknowledged, it is likely to make little no difference to the amount of traffic on the A120, and therefore safety issues and the implications for access are the same. The proposed Hadham Road roundabout avoids complex A120 access issues associated with the by pass in the future.

KF Considers that implementing the Hadham Road roundabout is likely to give more flexibility in the future with regard to any potential to change the location of the proposed Little Hadham by pass.

Cllr Alexander: The meeting was focussing on the existing roundabout because it does exist - how would access be designed if it were not there now?

VV Considers that the proposed access would remain the best arrangement Hadham Road residents.

Cllr Newman: Is the Paramics model independently validated to avoid bias and is it showing peak flows?

Ans: Yes – accredited by HCC and their consultants Aecom. Explained that there are about 200 car movements generated by BSN in the peak, and the modelling shows it to work satisfactorily. (Noted it is possible to drive between the east & west neighbourhoods, so , though the route would be a bit tortuous some traffic will travel that way). VV confirmed the accreditation of the model.

Cllr Alexander: Agrees that we need the Little Hadham by pass. In advance however, how much does BSN add to queuing at the lights? If the new school provided on the site is an academy and HCC cannot control admissions, there may be more traffic entering the site from the direction of Little Hadham.

ID The modelling does show lengthening of queues at the lights. This is set out in the transport assessment submitted.

BR Explained that the school is only an option for HCC to exercise at present. If it is an HCC school it could control admissions.

KF Understands there would be an extra 100m of cars (10 -15 or so) at the lights with a full build out – queried the timescale.

ID Build out is unlikely to be less than 8 years

VV The HCC team is optimistic it will be able to make progress on the implementation of the by pass in the near future, but it has to be acknowledged currently that the delivery timescale is not certain

Cllr Newman: Feels that, in conclusion, this meeting needs to be satisfied that all standard and non-standard access options have been looked at and are not being progressed for sound reasons, for example they result in a reduction in safety standards?

VV Confirmed that poor design solutions are likely to result in accidents and poorer safety records. HCC has a responsibility to ensure that safe solutions are implemented. He returned again to the Watford example

considered earlier where an oval roundabout was implemented as a compromise and it has queuing restrictions. This has proved a poor solution but, in this case, improvements were very costly and the solution was accepted on that basis.

The Chairman thanked all those present for their input into the consideration of the matter.

KS confirmed that information provided to the meeting along with this note, would be published on the Councils website. Following that the proposals would be reported back to a meeting of the committee with the benefit of the information gained at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 20.30