



**East Herts District Plan  
Transport Note on Goods Yard Site,  
Bishop's Stortford  
(November 2014)**

**Hertfordshire County Council  
County Hall  
Pegs Lane  
Hertford  
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## **1. Introduction**

The following has been produced in response to a request from East Herts District Council (EHDC) officers for a note from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the highway authority, on the transport impacts associated with the redevelopment of the Goods Yard Site in Bishop's Stortford and the case for the provision of a new road to improve access to the site.

The note is based on the consideration information that HCC have received from EHDC on Solum Regeneration's proposals for the site, including a letter sent by Savills to EHDC challenging the need for a link road (Oct 2014), together with a technical note from transport consultants Meyer Brown prepared in support of this argument (Oct 2014) and finally a technical note prepared by Peter Brett Associates (PBA) on the Bishop's Stortford - Goods Yard Link Road (Nov 2014).

## **2. Background**

The existing East Herts District Plan states that the Goods Yard site should:

- safeguard the ability to construct a new road linking the junction of Station Road with Dane Street and London Road, and provide land for the same.
- include residential development, with the aim of creating a minimum of 700 dwelling units on the site as a whole.
- include a fully integrated rail and bus passenger interchange and include good pedestrian/cycle links towards the town centre.

EHDC's preferred options consultation document for their emerging District Plan states that the Goods Yard site should:

- provide for 200 homes as part of a mixed use development.
- minimise on-site car parking to avoid worsening of town centre traffic congestion and the impact on the Hockerill Air Quality Management Area.
- Site promoters must work with HCC as the Highways Authority to undertake transport modelling to assess the need for a link road through the site, and to assess and provide suitable mitigation measures against vehicular congestion in the town centre.

It is understood that Solum Regeneration are proposing to bring forward a planning application for the Goods Yard site around September 2015.

## **3. HCC Views on Transport Needs**

HCC have stated during initial meetings on Solum's current proposals that to effectively minimise the disruption to the existing highway network and to ensure safe access and egress from the site, a southern access to the site is essential.

The information that has been received on the proposals to date does not provide sufficient information on the proposed transport impacts or the mitigation measures or access arrangements that are intended to support the development. It is critical that these are clarified at the earliest opportunity.

HCC's views on the transport elements of Solum's proposals are as follows:

- **The level of car parking provision proposed.** The proposals include a 700 space car park to be shared by commuters and residents of the new dwellings. The site currently holds consent for only 200 car parking spaces for commuters, which is also limited to a temporary period of three years (from Spring 2013). HCC question why such an increased level of parking is being proposed for a site in such a sustainable location. HCC's preference would be to see a lower level of car parking provision complimented by comprehensive measures and improvements aimed at supporting increased travel by sustainable transport modes i.e. improved bus services and associated infrastructure and improved cycle and pedestrian routes and facilities.
- **The provision of a new access road.** HCC consider that the proposals should include the provision of a new access road extending from the southern end of the site to the station interchange and believe that this could provide substantial benefits to the site and wider town if it is restricted to use by sustainable modes of transport.

HCC recognise that the case for 'all traffic' link road aimed at relieving congestion in the town, has not been demonstrated in past studies. It is important however that appropriate measures are brought forward to mitigate the impact on sustainable modes of travel that will result from traffic congestion associated with the cumulative impact of proposed development in the town and surrounding areas.

HCC concur with PBA's comments that the new road should be focussed on providing a dedicated connection from the south of the town to the station for buses, cyclists and pedestrians, creating a sustainable transport corridor that shortens journey times for non-car users and actively encourages modal shift.

Such a road would provide meaningful transport benefits which if designed appropriately would enhance the quality of the interchange and enhance the sustainable nature of the site. It would be consistent with the Solum's stated principles of providing an attractive, pedestrian and cycle friendly environment.

Meyer Brown's technical note also recognises the need to focus on using available space to maximise the number of trips by non-car means and that this would in turn deliver wider traffic benefits. It also supports the Solum's stated priority to provide additional interchange capacity for non car modes and to give maximum priority to non car modes. HCC do not consider a new access road would endanger the quality of the development and station interchange.

- **Air Quality Management Area.** The Hockerill junction in Bishop's Stortford is a recognised Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). A key element of the prevailing poor air quality conditions at this location relate to emissions from diesel engines including those of buses using the junction, which is exacerbated by buses often having to idle while stationary in queuing traffic. Hence, providing some relief from this congestion through the provision of a new sustainable transport link could help contribute to a reduction in emissions at this location.
- **Location of the bus station.** There has been a long standing aspiration, as set out in the 2007 Local Plan and the 2004 Goods Yard Site Development Brief, to relocate the existing bus station as part of the redevelopment of the Goods Yard site, to improve connectivity with the rail station. An essential characteristic of the development site is the importance of establishing a high quality and efficient transport interchange which sets a strong vision for promoting sustainable travel in the town.

To complement the newly redeveloped station facilities, HCC have been developing a design to improve both the existing station forecourt area and associated bus facilities. An outline scheme has been agreed and has been included in a successful bid for funding through the LEP Growth Deal, with a provisional delivery date of 2016/17. If Solum's development proposals were to come forward in line with these timescales it is likely that HCC could provide some support to the delivery of a new facility as part of the redevelopment by utilising the funding that has already been earmarked for station interchange improvements. If the site does not come forward the existing proposals may be delivered in co-operation with the Train Operating Company and any future redevelopment of the wider site would be required to deliver the aspirations for a relocated and improved facility as part of that development.

#### **4. HCC Views on Additional Transport Related Assessment Work**

HCC recommend that Solum and/or their transport consultants commence Pre App discussions with the County Council to ensure that there is early dialogue aimed at resolving the transport issues and concerns associated with the development.

Solum should engage with HCC at the earliest opportunity to agree the scoping of a detailed transport assessment. As a minimum this will need to define the development proposals and access arrangements, provide a detailed analysis of trip generation and distribution and the impacts of this on the existing highway network including the benefits of proposed mitigation measures. The assessment will need to recognise the trips generated by any increased car parking provision and set out the proposals aimed at maximising the accessibility of the site, including the improvement of facilities for sustainable modes of travel and their promotion through travel planning. This is especially important due to the sites central location in the town.

In order to meet the additional resource requirements associated with the Pre App process and to support the proposed timescales and needs to inform responses to the variety of highways and transportation issues linked with the site, HCC recommend the establishment of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) through which HCC will levy appropriate charges for officer's time. This will help to maximise the quality of the application both in terms of the material submitted and the content of the proposals.

HCC recommend that Solum work closely with the recently established Neighbourhood Planning group both from the perspective of tapping into the groups ideas and in the interests of managing expectations over what can be realistically delivered, in terms of transport impact and mitigation.

The transport impact of the development together with the proposals for measures aimed at mitigating this impact, including the access road, need to be tested within the context of the cumulative transport impacts associated with the wider development proposals included in East Herts District Councils emerging District Plan. Suitable modelling work needs to be undertaken to support this assessment. Solum might wish to consider seeking access to the Paramics model developed by WSP as part of the assessment of the traffic impacts associated with the recent Bishop's Stortford North planning application and to look to extend this to cover the southern half of Bishop's Stortford. Testing would need to consider whether it would be necessary to convert Dane Street to two way operation for the access road to operate most effectively.

It has been suggested in Meyer Brown's technical report that the cost of a new road would be of the order of £4.5M. The total cost however has not been substantiated and it is recommended a more detailed breakdown of costs is made available.

Finally, HCC consider that the Goods Yard Site provides an excellent opportunity to establish a development supported by an exemplar package of sustainable transport measures. It is also considered that this is the only realistic transport strategy for the site when considering the well-recognised restrictions that exist in Bishop's Stortford that prevent the implementation of improvements aimed at creating more capacity for the private car, due to the characteristics of the main roads and junctions within the town.