TECHNICAL NOTE

S|C|P
Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design

APPENDIX 1

13307 / 24.10.13

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION REF: 13/00379/OUT

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, BENNETTS LANE, WIDNES

1. A planning application has been submitted on land at Bennetts Lane, Widnes for residential development for up to 140 dwellings. The land is allocated for employment uses and benefits from planning consent for B1 office use.

2. The site is located to the east of A562 Dans Road, which is a key route between Warrington and Widnes and carries around 13,000 vehicles per day. To the north of the site the road is subject to a speed limit of 50mph and is at dual carriageway standard. Dans Road meets B5178 Warrington Road, Barrows Green Lane and Gorsey Lane at a 5 arm roundabout junction. Significant areas of residential development lie to the north west of Dans Road, served by Warrington Road and Barrows Green Lane, while significant employment development lies to the south east of Dans Road served by Gorsey Lane, which connects to Bennetts Lane.

Sustainable Access

3. The site is therefore surrounded by employment uses, including significant industrial uses such as a chemical works, and is divorced from the existing residential area by a major dual carriageway. Vehicular access to the site is taken from Bennetts Lane, requiring future residents to drive through an employment zone to reach the development site. Pedestrian access is not clearly shown on the plans submitted with the application and no footways are proposed to be constructed along Bennetts Lane except for around the radii of the site access.

4. A key component of NPPF is achieving sustainable development. In transport terms, decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people (para 32). In addition, the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel (para 29).

5. It is our opinion that the application proposals do not comply with the above requirements of NPPF. The Transport Statement submitted with the application presents a review of the site's accessibility, concluding that the site "is in a sustainable location with good public transport links and that walking and cycling are attractive options." However, the report provides no information on how pedestrians or cyclists from the site will access the surrounding highway network or offer any information on the connectivity between the site and the local facilities

quoted. It is therefore not clear whether adequate pedestrian and cycle access to the site can be secured.

6. While there is a range of local facilities within acceptable distances of the site, these are physically severed from the site by Dans Road. The notion of severance is outlined in the IEMA "Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic", published in 1993, which states:

Severance is the perceived division that can occur within a community when it becomes separated by a major traffic artery. The term is used to describe a complex series of factors that separate people from places and other people. Severance may result from the difficulty of crossing a heavily trafficked road or a physical barrier created by the road itself. It can also relate to quite minor traffic flows if they impede pedestrian access to essential facilities."

7. With the exception of employment opportunities, all other essential facilities are on the western side of Dans Road, which would require residents to cross a heavily trafficked dual carriageway that offers no controlled crossing facilities. Dans Road therefore severs the proposed residential development from the everyday facilities that it would rely on, rendering the site "unsustainable".

8. Further investigation of access to public transport reveals that from the bus services quoted, the single service that stops on Gorsey Lane has a frequency of just 5 per day. Two of the remaining three frequent services stop on Moorfield Road or Crow Wood Lane, which are only just within a 400m walk from the edge of the site, with the vast majority of properties exceeding the recommended 400m walk distance. Meanwhile the bus stops on Dans Road are also a similar distance from the site and would also require passengers to cross the dual carriageway, either on their outbound or inbound journey, at a point where traffic will be travelling at its quickest.

9. Therefore, the majority of the development is beyond recommended walking distances to all frequent bus services, while the need to cross a busy and fast flowing dual carriageway with no controlled crossing facilities will be an additional barrier that will not make travelling by public transport an attractive option.

10. The effect of Dans Road on severance will not only lead to a significant reduction in the attractiveness of walking to all other local facilities that lie on the other side of Dans Road, but will have a significant impact on access to schools. The location of schools will require all children to cross a busy dual carriageway, particularly during the morning peak hour when traffic will be at its busiest.

11. Based on the traffic flow information available, it is expected that Dans Road will carry around 1,300 vehicles (two-way) during the morning peak, equating to at least 650 vehicles in the busiest direction. Given that the typical gap acceptance for pedestrians crossing this width of carriageway will be about 7 to 8 seconds for able-bodied people and that children or elderly will require more than this, while the flow of traffic will result in a vehicle, on average, every 6 seconds, an uncontrolled crossing is not safe and acceptable when considering this site for residential development.

12. On the above basis, access to the site is considered neither safe nor sustainable and is highly likely to be balanced in favour of car-based trips.

Vehicular Access

13. The Transport Statement indicates that there is a desire to split the access for the residential use from the existing industrial uses on the adjacent sites. The principle of separating residential traffic from industrial traffic is a common desire so that residents aren't driving through industrial areas to reach their property. However, the proposed access is south of the existing access to the chemical works east of the site and therefore a complete separation is not possible.

14. Furthermore, the split of Bennetts Lane would require all land uses served by the northern section of Bennetts Lane to access the main highway network via the sub-standard junction onto Dans Road. The junction currently offers left turn in and left turn out for Bennetts Lane for vehicles travelling westbound along Dans Road along with right turn in with a right turning lane and a gap in the central reservation.

15. Dans Road is currently subject to a 50mph speed limit and it is possible that the 85th percentile speed is greater than this given the alignment and dual carriageway nature. There is no deceleration diverge or acceleration merge for vehicles entering or leaving Bennetts Lane, while the visibility for emerging vehicles is clearly inadequate for the speed limit. Any intensification in use of this junction would pose a highway safety risk and it is therefore surprising that no assessment or review of this junction has been carried out.

16. In addition, the chemical works operations require deliveries using tankers, which currently access the site via the roundabout junction with Gorsey Lane. Forcing all tankers to use the substandard junction with Bennetts Lane will also pose a highway safety risk given that such vehicles will be slow to decelerate on approach to Bennetts Lane and slow to accelerate when emerging from the junction.

17. The highway safety risk that is posed by these proposals to split access along Bennetts Lane will also prejudice future expansion of the chemical works business by restricting the amount of traffic that can use the junction with Dans Road, thereby affecting the future of the business. If the application were to remain as employment land, as it is allocated for, there would be no need to split Bennetts Lane and the business would be unaffected.