

16/01797/1: Land Rear Of 4-14, Claybush Road, Ashwell, SG7 5RA - Proposed Residential Development Claybush Road, Ashwell –

An independent review of the applicants Transport Statement

This note provides an independent review of the Transport Statement (TS) undertaken by WSP/Parsons Brinkerhoff on behalf of Croudace Homes, for the proposed residential development comprising 33 dwellings at land to the rear of 4-14 Claybush Road, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

This review follows a site visit undertaken on Monday 5th September 2016 whereby a drive through and walk through of the highway network in the vicinity of the proposals was undertaken.

This review finds particular problems with highway safety, specifically visibility, speed and access arrangements. Furthermore during our review it was also noted that procedural errors exist within the Transport Statement.

Existing Situation

The site is currently agricultural land comprising an area of approximately 1.5 hectares. There are currently two points of vehicular access to the site; one from Claybush Road and one from Ashwell Street. It is noted that both access points are currently only likely to be used by vehicles predominantly associated with the agricultural use of the site.

Access to the site from both Claybush Road and Ashwell Street are via predominantly unpaved 'access tracks' that also serve access to adjoining residential dwellings.

The existing access arrangements are shown overleaf in **Photographs 1 and 2**, but it should be noted even though they are existing access points, they are unsuitable for residential development use.

Photograph 1: Existing access from Claybush Road.



Photograph 2: Existing access from Ashwell Street.



Claybush Road

Claybush Road in the vicinity of the site is approximately 5 metres wide and is subject to a 30 mph speed limit although this transitions to the national speed limit for a single carriageway i.e. 60 mph immediately to the south of the proposed new site access. There are no formal standard footways within the vicinity of the proposed site access, although it is noted there are a number of grass verges fronting the residential properties to the west of Claybush Road, however the ownership of the grass verges is unknown. Some street lighting is present on Claybush Road with the nearest lighting column being located within the verge approximately 60 metres to the north of the existing/proposed site access.

Ashwell Street

Ashwell Street is a private access road and is approximately 2.5-3 metres wide and is partially paved, (although in a relatively poor condition) and serves 6 residential dwellings. There are no formal footways or street lighting along its length.

Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise 33 residential units. Vehicular access to the site will be provided via a new access from Claybush Road with pedestrian/cyclist access proposed via the PRow to the north of the site onto Ashwell Street.

Transport Statement Review

The scope of this review is limited to the highways and transportation matters considered relevant to the development of the proposed scheme. The purpose of this review is to evaluate the soundness of the methodology used within the Transport Statement (TS) to enable an informed judgment on the scheme proposals to be made.

Existing Traffic Flows

The TS indicates that vehicle speeds and volumes on Claybush Road have been obtained from data collected by an Automatic Traffic Counter (ATC) installed '*within the vicinity of the site on Claybush Road*' however, there are no details as to the exact location of the placement of the ATC either within the main body of the report or as part of the ATC data outputs included at Appendix B of the TS. It is unclear therefore if the ATC was installed within the 30mph or 60mph zone which clearly would have implications with regard to the applicable visibility splays which is discussed in more detail later on in this review.

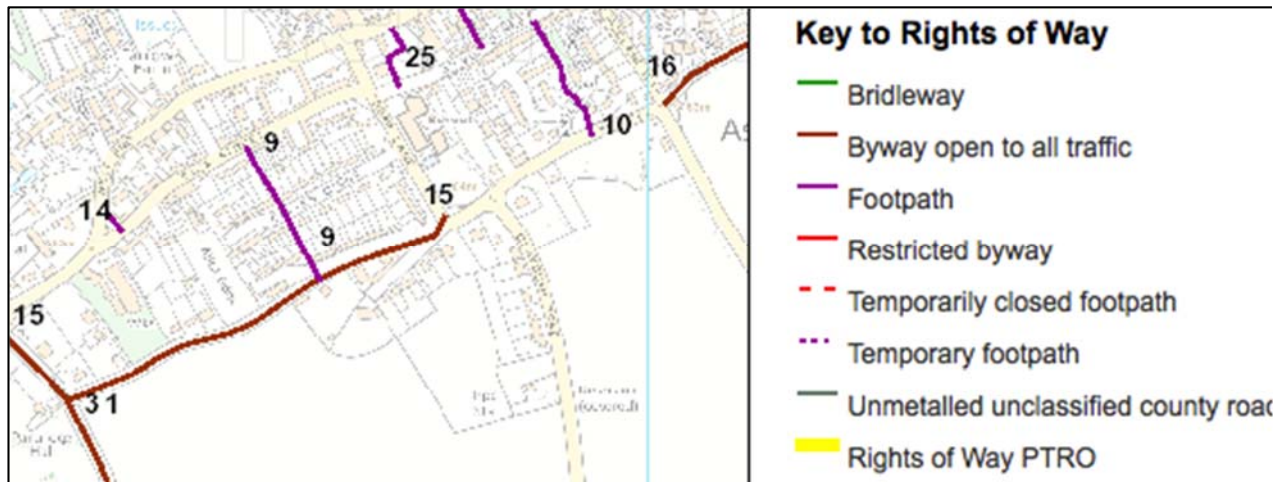
Accessibility

Walking and Cycling

The TS identifies that the main pedestrian and cycle access to the site will be via an assumed PRow to the

north of the site. However following consultation with Ashwell Parish Council it is understood that access rights do not exist over Ashwell Street, which is also further confirmed from Hertfordshire County Councils (HCC) PRoW map. Access rights are clearly required, especially when standard formal footways do not exist on Claybush Road. Existing PRoW in the vicinity are detailed at **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 – Extract of Hertfordshire County Council PRoW map.



Furthermore the TS however does not indicate any creation, modification or off-site improvements to the 'PRoW' which it is assumed will remain (that is if indeed the proposed link is a PRoW) as an unlit and unpaved grass path between the proposed site and Ashwell Street. Such a situation is wholly inappropriate and should be considered unsafe.

The TS has also stated that pedestrians will be able to utilise the site access to/from Claybush Road although it does not indicate any improvements to the very limited/nonexistent pedestrian provision on Claybush Road. Such a proposal is unsafe without improvements, but it is unclear how and when improvements can be provided. On this basis it is considered that connectivity to the site for pedestrians/cyclists would be substandard, especially for those with mobility impairments and also school children. This is contrary to national and regional planning and transport policies regarding accessibility and sustainability.

The TS also indicates that the existing network of off-site footways would provide suitable accessibility to local facilities within Ashwell for pedestrians or cyclists. However, based on observations made during the site visit the existing network of footways between the site and local trip attractors including the school, bus stops, shops, pub etc. are not continuous, restricted in width, have gradient and level differences i.e. steps or absence of dropped kerbs at crossing points and can be poorly lit and therefore would be unsuitable for a number of residents of the proposed development such as those with disabilities, users with pushchairs and school children etc.

Photographs 3-5 identify potential barriers for pedestrians along the existing pedestrian footways between the proposed development and attractors/facilities i.e. school, shop, bus stops etc. within Ashwell.

Photographs 3-5 – Potential barriers for certain pedestrian user groups between the site and local trip attractors.





The TS also states that Bear Lane would be suitable to accommodate pedestrian movements due to it being '*lightly trafficked*', however there is no justification for this statement or accompanying risk assessment/ Road Safety Audit to substantiate this view. Further even if Bear Lane were '*lightly trafficked*', nothing prevents it becoming more heavily trafficked in the future.

Public Transport

The TS suggests that the residents of the proposed development site would benefit from good levels of accessibility to both local bus services and rail services from Ashwell & Mordon rail station, however this view is considered subjective and relies on residents propensity to for example; wait at a bus stop potentially during inclement weather conditions that does not benefit from a bus shelter or to cycle to the rail station along unlit relatively narrow country lanes. It is suggested that an NMU audit is undertaken to identify the suitability of the proposed pedestrian/cycle routes between the site and key trip attractors.

Proposed Vehicular Access Arrangement

The vehicle swept path analysis undertaken on the proposed vehicular access arrangements show that a large vehicle such as refuse vehicle would be required to encroach into adjoining lanes when accessing/egressing the site which could potentially result in collisions on Claybush Road. Such a situation should be considered high risk given limited visibility. This issue would also be applicable at the first internal junction within the site. Furthermore, if cars are parked on the internal access road this may restrict certain vehicles from circulating within the site, potentially resulting in the requirement to perform reversing manoeuvres over excessive distances that that can increase the risk of personal injury collisions particularly

for refuse workers, but also residents.

Visibility at the Proposed Access Arrangement

The junction visibility splays at the proposed site access have been based on the 85th percentile vehicle speeds recorded by an ATC installed 'in the vicinity of the proposed site access'. As previously stated the exact location of the ATC has not been provided within the TS. Guidance including that contained within DMRB TA 22/81 advises that when using observed vehicle speed surveys to calculate appropriate levels of junction visibility splays, that speed surveys should be undertaken on the approach to a junction from either direction, typically this would be at the extent of the proposed visibility splay both to the left and right of the proposed site access.

Analysis of the vehicle speed survey data included within the TS indicates the following observed vehicle speeds on Claybush Road and associated proposed minimum visibility requirements:

- Northbound: 41 mph - 84.7 metres.
- Southbound: 36.7 mph – 71.8 metres.

However, a review of the ATC data provided in Appendix B of the TS indicates that the 85th percentile speeds for vehicles traveling southbound at the location of the ATC is 43 mph, and therefore the associated visibility splay is incorrect. Furthermore, it is also unclear if the proposed visibility splays can be achieved without encroachment into 3rd party land, which is likely to be beyond existing ownership, but also vegetation maintenance. It is suggested therefore that clarification on the above matters should be sought urgently or indeed if they have been based on wet or dry weather conditions which has implications in how the required visibility splays are calculated.

Traffic Impact

The following geometric data inputs used within the PICADY assessment included at Appendix J of the TS are considered to be incorrect and will affect the junction capacity outputs reported within the TS:

- Total Major Road Carriageway Width – 6 metres
- Major Road Right Turn Traffic Blocks Traffic - No
- Minor Road visibility to Left (91 metres) and Right (94 metres) from an 'X' distance of 10m

Summary & Conclusion

This note has provided an independent review of the Transport Statement (TS) and highway proposals for the proposed residential development comprising 33 dwellings at land to the rear of 4-14 Claybush Road, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

This review has found the following problems;

- The site's existing access points are only suitable for agricultural use
- The proposed access has an incorrect stated visibility splay, based on inaccurate calculations
- Access to the site for large vehicles is troublesome and is unsafe
- Significant queries exist over ATC placement and speed data measurements
- The site does not have continuous accessible links, especially for pedestrians and schoolchildren
- Access and footways cannot be delivered easily to meet formal required standards on public land
- Junction assessment calculations are incorrect.

In summary, there are a number of matters that have been highlighted that we consider warrant significant further review, correction or clarification with regard to Transport and Highway Safety. Without these matters being addressed we strongly recommend the application be refused on traffic and transport grounds.