Developments Affecting Trunk Roads and Special Roads

Highways England Planning Response (HEPR 16-01)
Formal Recommendation to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Alan Shepherd
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To: Warrington Borough Council – Alison Gough

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Council's Reference: 2019/34799

Referring to the planning application referenced above, dated 21st May 2019, for an outline application (all matters reserved except for access) comprising the construction of up to 287,909m² (gross internal) of employment floorspace (Use Class B8 and B1(a) offices) including change of use of Bradley Hall Farmhouse to B1 (a) office use (335m²) and associated servicing and infrastructure including car parking and vehicle and pedestrian circulation, alteration of existing access road into site including works to the M6 J20 dumbbell roundabouts and realignment of the existing A50 junction, noise mitigation, earthworks to create development platforms and bunds, landscaping including buffers, creation of drainage features, electrical substation, pumping station, and ecological works, accompanied by an Environmental Statement on land to the West of Junction 20 of the M6 Motorway, and Junction 9 of the M56 Motorway and to the south of, Grappenhall Lane/Cliff Lane (known as Six:56 Warrington) Grappenhall, Warrington, notice is hereby given that Highways England's formal recommendation is that we:

a) ~~offer no objection~~;

b) ~~recommend that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted (see Annex A – Highways England recommended Planning Conditions);~~

c) recommend that planning permission not be granted for a specified period (see Annex A – further assessment required);

d) ~~recommend that the application be refused (see Annex A – Reasons for recommending Refusal).~~

Highways Act Section 175B ~~is~~ / is not relevant to this application.[1]

This represents Highways England formal recommendation and is copied to the Department for Transport as per the terms of our Licence.

Should you disagree with this recommendation you should consult the Secretary of State for Transport, as per the Town and Country Planning (Development Affecting Trunk Roads) Direction 2018, via transportplanning@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

Signature: 	**Date:** 20th December 2019
Name: Benjamin Laverick	**Position:** Assistant Asset Manager
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[1] Where relevant, further information will be provided within Annex A.

Annex A ~~**Highways England recommended Planning Conditions**~~ **/**
Highways England recommended further assessment required /
~~**Highways England recommended Refusal.**~~

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND ("we") has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

Further to previous correspondence in connection with the above site I write to provide our comments on the Curtins' response of 14th November 2019, which considers our previously raised points regarding:

- Junction modelling issues; and
- Merge and diverge issues.

Junction Modelling

In our last review the we made several comments regarding how the modelling in LinSig did not always match the drawing of the proposed junction arrangements. Revised junction models using the LinSig platform were supplied to Highways England by Curtins following their letter of 14th November.

Most of the comments have been addressed in the latest version of the model. However, the following comments, mentioned in the previous review, still require addressing or additional analysis/supporting information:

- Supply of geometric take-offs to Atkins in order accurately check the coding of the saturation flows in the revised model;
- There are a number of locations where queuing on the circulatory carriageway is more than can be accommodated without blocking the upstream exit, which could lead to an overestimation of the capacity of the network. For example, this occurs on J1:5-2, J1:8-3 and J2:8-1;
- Lanes J2:1-2, J1:5-3, J1:4-3 should be 'nearside'. There still remains no justification for the reason(s) these lanes are coded as other than 'nearside'; and
- Supply supporting analysis for the appropriateness of the modelled merges between the two junctions. While our initial review has concluded that the base LinSig model is appropriate to draw broad conclusions to the appropriateness of the proposed mitigation, the addition of merges between junctions in the

model with mitigation will not accurately reflect the impact of blocking back from these merges, causing knock-on consequences for the operation of the M6 Junction 20.

Curtins have provided the ARCADY model titled '*M6 J20 Eastern Rbt-Proposed Improvement*' to support the 'maximum flow while giving way' and coefficient values for movements from arm J1:3. Atkins finds that the modelling of this junction is not suitable due to the segregation of the left turn and ahead lanes at the Cliff Lane approach. It is therefore required to model each of the lanes separately to determine the saturation flow for each lane of traffic.

In addition, Highways England has not yet received geometric take-offs and hence can't review the geometrics in the model. The lane length of 60pcu for J1:9-3 appears unrealistic and should be reassessed.

Merge and Diverge issues

At the time of Curtins' assessment, the merge calculations were based on information contained in DMRB Volume 6, Section 2 Part 1, TD22/06. This has now been replaced by DMRB CD122 Revision 0 which for this assessment is broadly the same as that earlier design standard.

Merge junction

The existing layout is a simple merge, but with two lanes on the slip road rather than the 1 required in the morning; 2 lanes are required for 2017 evening peak hour flows. The merge is also controlled by ramp metering. There are 4 lanes on the mainline either side of the merge. The merge can be regarded as type A referencing the both the previous and current design standards.

Curtins have stated their Transport Assessment of 13th February 2019 that the northbound merge junction with the M6 meets the current merge-type at 2017 traffic levels in the morning peak hour but falls short of the requirement in the evening peak hour.

Concentrating on the evening peak hour assessment, where there is a more onerous requirement, the current proposals deliver more generated traffic than the Stobart proposal; a 10.7% increase in traffic (at 2022 traffic forecasts) against the Stobart proposal's 8.6% increase. Whilst the existing provision does not necessarily meet the design standard required, we would re-iterate that we would welcome Curtins comments regarding the analysis and more substantial mitigation offerings, notwithstanding the similar impact arising from the Stobart proposal.

Diverge junction

We considered it equally prudent to review the diverge junction, on the M6 southbound carriageway.

Cumulative impact of the Warrington Local Plan developments

We have not had any comments regarding the cumulative impact of the Warrington Local Plan developments as per our response of 16th October.

Summary

As a summary, the key issues highlighted previously and within this review include:

- Geometric take-offs to Atkins in order accurately check the coding of the saturation flows in the revised model;
- Queuing back;
- 'Non-nearside' coding justification;
- Lanes J2:1-2, J1:5-3, J1:4-3 should be 'nearside'. There still remains no justification for the reason(s) these lanes are coded as other than 'nearside; and
- Supply supporting analysis for the appropriateness of the modelled merges between the two junctions;
- Lane modelling for the eastern roundabout proposed improvement;
- Geometric take-off for the eastern roundabout proposed improvement;
- Merge and Diverge junction commentary on mitigation measures;
  Commentary on cumulative impacts.

Consequently, to allow the applicant to address the issues identified, provide the required information and for Highways England to review the information, Highways England formally recommends that this application not be determined before 25th March 2020.

This response represents our formal recommendation with regard to planning application 2019/34799 and has been prepared by Benjamin Laverick, the Assistant Asset Manager for Cheshire and Warrington within Highways England.