

From: Jon Fellingham <jon.fellingham@somerset.gov.uk>

Date: Thursday, 3 April 2025 at 15:13

To: Sue Isherwood <sueisherwood9@gmail.com>, Amelia Elve <amelia.elve@somerset.gov.uk>, Emma Meecham <emma.meecham@somerset.gov.uk>, Dawn deVries <dawn.devries@somerset.gov.uk>, Cllr Richard Wilkins <richard.wilkins@somerset.gov.uk>, 'Ros Wyke' <roswyke@yahoo.co.uk>

Subject: RE: Proposed Development on Land at Roughmoor Lane, Westbury-sub-Mendip: Highway and Pedestrian safety - Local Plan Policy WM1

Dear Sue,

Apologies for the delay in responding to you on this matter, but as you would expect given the detail of the Parish Council's e mail it has taken time for me and the team to pull the relevant information together to be able to respond appropriately. In terms of responding to each point I will look to follow the structure of your e mail.

Firstly, regarding your follow up questions after our meeting in February. In terms of why a widening of the pavement width between Court House Farm entrance and the existing crossing has not been tested. This doesn't form part of the application and therefore cannot be assessed by the Highway Authority. Furthermore, the land is not in the ownership of the applicant as such they are not able to put it forward without the relevant landowner's permission. In addition to this the applicant would need to seek consent for the changes to the listed building curtilage. Without these elements being in places there is limited benefit to testing this proposal.

Turning to your second question relating to pedestrian safety weighted against vehicle movements. As we discussed previously pedestrian safety is always a principal consideration for the Highway Authority. Whilst national guidance relates to best practice for pedestrian movements which sets safety as one of the key areas.

Regarding the increased use of the current crossing and the Highway Authority's position on this. The wording of the Local Plan policy is 'should provide' and as we discussed if the applicant is willing to accommodate our suggestion to reduce the speed limit to 20mph then the crossing point would become safer than it is currently. As our planning colleagues explained this site is allocated in the Local Plan and given the national need to deliver housing and Somerset's 5-year housing supply figures this would hold weight in the processing of the application. Consequently, it is unlikely that even if this application were to be refused by the Council it most likely would be allowed on appeal.

Finally in terms of the Highway Authority observations, this application is subject to a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). As such the Highway Authority is obligated to submit comments in a timely manner. As such we cannot guarantee that we were able to withhold submitting them until the Parish Council has made their representation.

Safer Crossing Options

Your e mail notes that the Parish Council has not seen any evidence that other options and sites for a pedestrian crossing have been tested. You followed this up with an example of a crossing area on the footway presently occupied by the bus shelter at the School Hill junction. In all these scenarios consideration must be given to the pedestrian desire lines for where pedestrians wish to cross the highway. The other options would all have limitations which would mean they aren't able to accommodate a suitable crossing facility. It's noted that during our meeting the Parish Council spoke about the possibility of securing additional land and diverting the existing Public Right of Way. As I stated at the time the Highway Authority has no objection to the Parish Council investigating this matter further. But Highway Authority cannot withhold submitting their submission to the Planning Team due to the PPA requirements whilst these discussions are carried out.

I note that you refer to paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as in Parish's opinion the crossing point isn't considered to be suitable and can therefore be considered to be severe. In our role as a Statutory Consultee the Highway Authority has to balance the requirements of the scheme against the existing highway infrastructure as well as Local Plan policy. As well as this we must also balance any requested mitigation to be in proportion with the size and scale of the proposal. Given that through the pre application process the applicant has amended the scheme to incorporate the Highway Authority's requirements it would be difficult to raise an objection to the proposal especially if you add in the weight of this being an allocated site. As we said when we met, we understand your concerns and part of this will see us engage with the applicant through the planning process to ask for additional requirements such as reducing the speed limit and redressing the existing road markings.

Existing Footways

The Parish Council's concerns over the existing footway widths are understood and I note that your e mail refers to paragraph 3.5.24 of the applicant's Transport Assessment as well as Manual for Streets (MfS). Having reviewed MfS Figure 7.1 does show that the absolute minimum for two goods vehicles to pass each other is 5.5m. But it does go onto to state that this is guidance. Paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.2.2 sets out the features that can impact on this such as highway widths, curvature of the carriageway and the volume of vehicular traffic. Furthermore, its acknowledged that there are existing footways and any works to widen them would require the removal of a wall which is within the curtilage of a listing building. Consequently, it would be unclear in some parts if this would be possible or would be succeed in the goal of widening the footway. In addition, a reduction in the carriageway width would likely result in difficulties for larger vehicles to pass each other the result of which would be wing mirrors oversailing the footway causing hazard for pedestrians.

Revisions to the Highway Authority's pre app response:

In relation to your final point and the Highway Authority's pre application comments and in particular the Parish Council's request for the Highway Authority to revisit these in light of your concerns. In terms of our position, I hope our meeting and the above response sets out clearly the Highway Authority's position on this matter. Although it is worth noting that pre application advice is not binding and is always subject to the details being submitted within the application. The Highway Authority will provide comment on the planning proposals in due course and substantiate this with reasoning behind our recommendations.

I trust the above has been able to address the points you have raised. The Highway Authority understands the concerns raised by the Parish Council. But as I have set out, we can only request highway works which are considered to be reasonable and in keeping with the developments size and scale. We acknowledge that the proposal would likely see this crossing point utilised more and that is why we are looking to engage with the applicant to increase the off-site mitigation works package.

Kind regards

Jon

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