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Your Ref: S62A/2023/0019  
Our Ref: ATE/23/00398/FULL  
Date: 07 September 2023

## Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: The Planning Inspectorate

**Application Ref:** S62A/2023/0019

**Site Address:** Land to the north of Roseacres, between Parsonage Road and Smiths Green Lane, Takeley, CM22 6NZ

**Description of development:** Access to/from Parsonage Road between Weston Group Business Centre and Innovation Centre buildings leading to: 96 dwellings on Bulls Field, south of Prior's Wood, including associated parking, landscaping, public open space, land for the expansion of Roseacres Primary School, pedestrian and cycle routes to Smiths Green Lane together with associated infrastructure

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~
- b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~
- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.
- d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

### 1.0 Background

These comments have been prepared by Active Travel England (ATE) in response to application with reference S62A/2023/0019, they should be read in conjunction with a detailed Assessor's Report which is submitted with this formal response.

The application site is not allocated in the Uttlesford Local Plan adopted in 2005. However, Policy GEN1 Access includes the following, which relates to active travel:

- c) *'The design of the site must not compromise road safety and must take account of the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, public transport users, horse riders and people whose mobility is impaired.*
- d) *It must be designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities if it is development to which the general public expect to have access.*
- e) *The development encourages movement by means other than driving a car'.*

A revised Local plan is currently being developed and expected to be adopted in 2026.

An Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan was published in March 2018. The aims of the plan are to:

- *'Identify how cycling levels can be increased in the District;*
- *Prioritise funding for new cycling schemes in Uttlesford;*
- *Create a usable, high-quality cycle network that connects residential areas with key employment locations, railway stations and town centres; and*
- *Create opportunities to increase recreational cycling in Uttlesford'.*

It is noted in the plan that *'Improving cycle infrastructure in the vicinity of the airport and between it and key origins would assist in a transfer of employee journey to work trips by car to bike. Notable origins for employee journey to work at the airport include: Takeley, ...'*

Table 7.1 in the Cycling Action Plan identifies Takeley to Stansted Airport (Scheme 23) as a potential future scheme with supporting commentary as follows:

*'The Takeley corridor heads across country (land ownership issues) to the west of Parsonage Road and utilises a proposed cycle bridge to cross the A120. The corridor then follows into existing Public Rights of Way (PROW 48\_45 and PROW 48\_17) (footpath conversions\*) which will be upgraded before connecting into existing and proposed cycling infrastructure around the Airport's perimeter.*

*Another option could be to implement a link along Parsonage Road, due to 85th percentile traffic speeds of 44.8mph Sustrans would only recommend physical segregation with verge. (option shown as indicative line on the map)'.*

Uttlesford District Council (UDC) has started the consultation process for an LCWIP but it has not yet been published.

This application site was included as part of a larger application with reference UTT/21/1987/FUL, which was refused by UDC in December 2021 and dismissed at appeal in August 2022.

Application UTT/22/2744/FUL for the erection of 4 no. industrial/flexible employment (Use Class E) buildings with associated landscaping and parking was approved in June 2023. It is situated immediately north of this application site.

## **2.0 Summary**

As far as can be determined from the submitted documents the application does not provide sufficient information for ATE to be assured that the design of the development, proposed active travel infrastructure and travel plan will create an environment that supports and embeds active travel.

ATE considers that the application as submitted does not demonstrate sufficiently that *'appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up'* in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph

110a, or that 'safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users in accordance with NPPF paragraph 110b. It is therefore recommended that this application should not be determined until further information has been submitted and reviewed.

### **3.0 National Policy and Guidance**

*The NPPF states:*

110. In assessing... specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location; [and]
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;

112. ...applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas...;
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport; [and]
- c) create places that... minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles...;

*Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking* is the Government's cycling and walking plan for England. This sets the Government's vision for cycling and walking to be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030. Active Travel England's responsibilities for walking also extend to "wheeling", such as the use of wheelchairs (self-propelled or powered) and mobility scooters.

*Inclusive mobility:* making transport accessible for passengers and pedestrians provides guidance on designing and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of public transport and pedestrian infrastructure.

*Active Design* (Sport England, supported by Active Travel England and the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities) sets out how the design of our environments can help people to lead more physically active and healthy lives.

*Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20)* provides guidance to local authorities on delivering high quality, cycle infrastructure. It includes five core design principles which represent the 'essential requirements to achieve more people travelling by cycle or on foot, based on best practice both internationally and across the UK' and detailed design standards to cycle infrastructure.

*Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements* chapter of the Planning Practice Guidance (*DLUHC, 2014*) provides advice on when transport reports are required and what they should contain. This includes an assessment of public transport capacity, walking/cycling capacity and road network capacity, and measures to promote sustainable travel. Also required is a qualitative and quantitative description of the travel characteristics of the proposed development, including movements across all modes of transport that would result from the development and in the vicinity of the site.

### **4.0 Opportunities**

The application site proposes east-west walking, wheeling and cycle routes which have potential to form active travel links between Priors Green and Takeley if they can be connected well at either end into the existing network.

The applicant is willing to make a contribution towards the active travel link to Stansted Airport identified in the Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan 2018 as stated in paragraph 3.11 of the transport assessment. However, the details of the contribution have not been provided while no details of a draft Section 106 Agreement are available.

## **5.0 Areas of Concern**

Detailed analysis of the application is contained in the accompanying Appraiser's Report which should be read in conjunction with these comments.

### **Trip generation**

Quantification of the forecast active travel movements generated by the proposed development (including any targets to increase active travel) is missing from both the transport assessment and travel plan and therefore the analysis presented provides very little evidence upon which to build an effective strategy for a healthy and inclusive development. This information combined with traffic flows is required to design the appropriate active travel infrastructure within the application site and to key facilities.

### **Qualitative review of external active travel routes**

The location of the site means that it is more than 800m from many key facilities. The accessibility maps in the transport assessment provide information on the distances to key facilities but limited information on the quality of the routes and therefore whether they are of sufficient standard to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling. Key to this site include routes to bus stops, Takeley village centre and Priors Green village centre. Crossings should be considered on Parsonage Road.

Routes to existing and future key facilities must be carefully considered to ensure that they are designed in accordance with the standards in LTN 1/20 and can accommodate future walking, wheeling and cycling trips. A more detailed analysis of them is required in order to provide an understanding of the design and deliverability of schemes which are required to embed active travel and ensure that the modal share targets are met. The Level of Service Tool and Junction Assessment Tool in LTN 1/20, and the Walking Route Audit Tool, should be used to assess key routes and develop appropriate schemes compliant with current standards. Although the transport assessment references that this work had been undertaken (paragraph 3.10) it could not be located in the submitted documents.

### **Access and permeability of the site**

A number of points of access for walking and cycling have been identified on the submitted plans. Further details are required to ensure that they link up with existing and proposed development on the adjacent land.

### **Parsonage Road access**

It is not clear from submitted plans exactly how the development links to the proposed access onto Parsonage Road and in particular how the footway/cycleway shown on the northern side of the access road in drawing no. WH202C-10-P-10.20 (B4 General Arrangement) joins with the footway/cycleway on the northern side of the access road shown in 2007045-SK-11 (B44 Parsonage Road Access). A dimensioned plan should be provided to clearly identify this.

Most pedestrians and cyclists will be entering the site from the south via Parsonage Road. A wider footway exists at this point than appears to be shown on the access drawing. It should be shown how the wider footway will be extended into the employment site while pedestrians should be provided with a safe crossing point to the northern footway/cycleway as there is no continuation of the footway to the residential area on the southern side of the access road.

### **Public Rights of Way**

The proposed provision of these east-west active travel routes on PROWs 40 and 41 is welcome. Clarification is required as to how they will be implemented within the constraints of the Highway Act 1980 to allow cyclists and pedestrians to benefit from the routes. The principles of the surfacing and lighting are acceptable to ATE but should be confirmed with the local highway authority.

The Design and Access Statement identifies a Sustainable Route Hierarchy (page 41). This shows a functional active travel route to the south of the site that includes PROW footpath 41 and extends west past the proposed school land. This route is shown to connect into a point adjacent to Roseacres Primary School and continue south. However this does not appear to connect to highway such that clarification is required as to how this is to be achieved.

PROW footpath 41 is identified as the active travel functional route, although details of any treatment of this link cannot be identified in the submitted documents. The assessment required above should identify whether it is possible to improve this narrow, unlit link which passes between and close to the front of existing housing to make it more appropriate as a functional route for pedestrians.

PROW footpath 40 is identified as a recreational active travel route on the Sustainable Route Hierarchy. While the eastern end may act as recreational route, the western end acts as the only cycle access from Takeley and therefore should be considered functional. PROW 40 extends west to Parsonage Road, yet no mention is made of any improvements to this part of the PROW that would act as a more direct route to bus stops and facilities on Parsonage Road for pedestrians. Again the assessment required above should identify what work would be necessary to improve this link for pedestrians and cyclists where practicable.

Details of the cycle accesses on to Smith Green are required. A crossing of Smiths Green should be considered to link to Jacks Lane. Jacks Lane is the most direct route to Priors Green local centre and proposals to improve this for pedestrians and cyclists should be considered.

### **Cycle Parking**

As far as can be ascertained from submitted plans B.40 and B.15 the proposed space allocated for cycle parking does not appear to be adequate (see attached assessors report). This should be revised in line with local/national design guidance in the Essex Parking Standards (2009) and details provided.

### **Car Parking**

The site is situated close to Stansted Airport and fly parking is known to be an issue in the vicinity of the airport. The provisions of parking restrictions should be considered and discussed with the local highway authority and secured through the appropriate mechanism, to ensure that inappropriate parking does not impact on walking, wheeling and cycling facilities.

The design of the residential car parking should be reviewed on roads where this is set back from the footways, as the additional space could encourage additional vehicular parking that may encroach onto the footways or cycleways and cause an obstruction (see Assessors Report and Essex Parking Standards (2009)).

### **Travel Plan**

The submitted travel plan requires further detail on the level of active travel trips that are forecast to be generated. Initial targets for mode share should be more ambitious to reflect the government's vision in Gear Change for active travel to be the natural first choice for many journeys. Details of the infrastructure to be provided and how its use will be embedded by initiatives and incentives in the travel plan should be outlined and committed to. Details of actions to be taken if the targets are not met should be outlined and committed to with the intention for these to be secured, implemented and monitored through the planning conditions / Section 106 obligations. The final travel plan should be submitted for approval prior to the first occupation of the development.

## **6.0 Next Steps**

This advice and the Appraiser's Report should be forwarded to the applicant's agent and local highway authority. ATE would be content review further submitted information to help address the identified issues; with a view to providing a further response and revised recommended wording for planning conditions and obligations.

Notwithstanding the recommendation that further information is provided in order to ensure that the application site takes up appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes which are designed in compliance with LTN 1/20, should the inspector be minded to grant planning permission, ATE would recommend the following conditions / obligations be applied after consultation with the local highway authority as appropriate.

### **Conditions**

#### **Pedestrian and cycle access**

No development shall commence until details of the site access points for pedestrians and/or cyclists shown in principle on drawing numbers WH202C-10-P-10.20 and 2007045-SK-11 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority and Active Travel England. The accesses should include associated crossings of Smiths Green and Parsonage Road. The development shall not be occupied until the means of access for pedestrians and/or cyclists for the development or phase of development have been constructed in accordance with the approved details which shall thereafter be retained for access purposes only.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and permeability of the site for pedestrians and cyclists.

#### **Walking and cycling network**

No development shall take place until a scheme is submitted to and approved by the planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority and Active Travel England to identify how the treatment of Public Rights of Way (PROW) will deliver the proposed active travel network in the submitted plans. The scheme should identify the required legal mechanisms and details of dimensions, surfacing, lighting, drainage, structures and signage. The approved scheme shall be implemented for the following PROWs:

PROW 40 between Parsonage Road and Smith's Green

PROW 41 between Leyfield and Smith's Green.

Where appropriate they should be offered for adoption as part of the development highway network.

Reason: In the interests of promoting walking, wheeling and cycling within and to and from the development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 110.

### **Cycle Parking**

No development shall commence until details of the proposed cycle parking have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority and Active Travel England. The cycle parking provision and design shall accord with the guidance in the Essex Parking Standards (2009). The development shall not be occupied until the cycle parking has been constructed and completed in accordance with the approved details and is available for use, and shall thereafter be kept free of obstruction and permanently available for the parking of cycles only.

Reason: To comply with Policy GEN8 Vehicle Parking Standards of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 which adopts the Essex Parking Standards (2009) as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

### **Residential Travel Plan**

No development shall commence until a Travel Plan comprising immediate, continuing and long-term measures to promote and prioritise alternatives to private vehicular use, which shall include clear objectives and modal share targets together with a time-bound programme of implementation, monitoring, regular review and interventions (in the event of a failure to meet modal share targets), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority and Active Travel England. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented, monitored and reviewed in accordance with the agreed Travel Plan measures and targets to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

Reason: In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 113 in order to deliver sustainable transport objectives including a reduction in private vehicular journeys and the increased use of public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling.

In addition to the above, appropriate measures that would restrict parking to prevent airport fly parking should also be agreed with the local highway authority and secured through a condition as appropriate.

### **Section 106 obligations**

A financial sum (index linked) should be secured via a Section 106 Agreement that would contribute to the design and implementation of a cycle route between Takeley and Stansted Airport as outlined in principle in the Uttlesford District Cycling Action Plan (2018).