

Your Ref: S62A/2023/0031
Our Ref: HT/SD/RMc/57218
Date: 09/02/2024



Essex County Council

Highways and Transportation
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 1QH

CC (by email): Cllr Gadd
Essex Highways Development Management
Public Rights of Way team
Uttlesford District Council

To: Inquiries and Major Casework Team
The Planning Inspectorate
3rd Floor
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Consultation response

Application No.	S62A/2023/0031
Applicant	Kier Ventures Ltd
Site Location	Land North of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden
Proposal	The erection of up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park

This S62A application is for up to 55 dwellings accessed through the Knight Retail Park. The applicant sought pre-application advice from the highway authority, which was issued in September 2023, and much of our advice has been incorporated in the application, which is welcomed.

The assessment of the application, including its Transport Assessment, was undertaken with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and in particular paragraphs 114-116, the following was considered: access and safety; capacity; the opportunities for sustainable transport; and mitigation measures.

The highway authority is not currently in a position to support this application and requests clarification on a number of matters to assist with our assessment. We welcome further discussion with the applicant and their transport consultant ahead of any hearing in order to resolve these matters and are happy to review additional submissions if provided (and accepted by PINS).

Active Travel and Public Rights of Way

- We welcome the removal of the vehicular route across byway 18 which was presented at pre-application stage.
- The applicant is reminded that byway 18 is open to all traffic including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles.
- References are made throughout the application to delivering 'Phase 2 of the multi-user orbital greenway' as part of this development – we would welcome clarity on the status of this multi-user orbital greenway. We understand a 'Phase 1' was secured as part of the permission S62A/2022/0014 Land west of Thaxted Road however, that phase was provided on land within the control of the developer and not on an existing byway as is proposed here.
- We request that all of the existing public rights of way are shown on the relevant plans. On the Framework Plan (3119-A-1004-PR-D) and the Access Plan (3119-A-1202-PR-D) only footpath 36 is marked.

- The Access Plan (3119-A-1202-PR-D) indicates a potential diverted route for the footpath 36. The applicant should note that the public's rights and ease of passage over the footpath must be maintained free and unobstructed on its existing route until such time as a diversion order is granted. The applicant should also note that the grant of planning permission does not automatically mean that a public right of way can be diverted and the relevant processes must be adhered to. If footpath 36 is to be diverted, we require a 2m width to be provided with no planting within 3m.
- On the Land Use Plan (3119-A-1201-PR-E) the Green Infrastructure key notes "green infrastructure may also include crossing points of roads" – we would welcome clarification on whether the applicant expects road crossings as part of the green infrastructure
- We have safety concerns in relation to pedestrians and potentially cyclists crossing byway 18 which is open to all traffic:
 - We do not support the formation of additional pedestrian links to/across byway 18.
 - The Sketch Site Layout (3119-C-1005-SK-J) indicates 3 new pedestrian links to the byway, as well as 2 new pedestrian links to bridleway 19, although it is not clear that any of these connections actually reach the PROW as there appears to be a gap.
 - The existing hedgerows along byway 18 restrict visibility between users of the byway and pedestrians wishing to cross.
 - What, if any, measures would be taken to prevent cyclists utilising the informal pedestrian paths and/or footpath 36?
- Will there be connectivity to the play area and green space of Poppy View (Cardamom Road)? This is shown on the Access Plan (3119-A-1202-PR-D) as a 'potential pedestrian access point'
- Given the lack of specific 'cycle access' shown on the Access Plan (3119-A-1202-PR-D) is it the applicant's intention that all cyclists will leave the site via the vehicular access into Knight Retail Park?
- At paragraph 6.7 of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the applicant notes "permanent changes include: introduction of new Green Infrastructure including... footpaths and multi-use bridleway..." – we ask the applicant to note that we would not accept any new public right of way footpaths or bridleway within the site as they would not contribute to the wider network. These would need to be signed as permissive.
- At paragraph 3.11 of the Transport Statement, the applicant notes "both eastbound and westbound bus stops are within 400m walk distance (5-minute walk time) of the entire Site" – we would welcome confirmation of this distance measurement/the routes used to determine it.
- Assuming the use of the Knight Retail Park access road as the main pedestrian route to Thaxted Road, consideration should be given to providing dropped kerbs, tactile paving and refuge islands at the priority junctions along the access road. The carriageway of the Knight Retail Park access road is within the red line of the application site, although the footways are not so it is not clear whether the applicant could provide these.

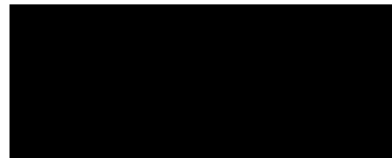
Buses

- We welcome the applicant's offer within the Transport Statement to contribute towards enhancement of infrastructure at local bus stops.
- The highway authority has plans to introduce two new regular services which will terminate/begin at the Knight Retail Park. Our plans involve using the existing turning head to turn buses, which will not be possible if the access to the development is constructed. As such, we request that appropriate bus turning facilities be provided on the development site – this could take the form of the central loop road of the proposed development being designed as suitable for buses.
- Our emerging plans for new services to the Knight Retail Park will require two bus stops within the Knight Retail Park – one arrival stop requiring bus clearway markings, raised kerb, pole and flag, and one exit stop to full specification (e.g. bus stop clearway markings, shelter, real-time passenger information display, raised kerb, seating, pole and flag). The carriageway of the Knight Retail Park access road is within the red line of the application site, although the footways are not. We would welcome clarity on whether it would be within the applicant's control to provide the infrastructure described.
- The two existing shelters closest to the site (Tiptofts Lane adj. southbound and Tiptofts Lane opp. northbound) do not currently have real-time passenger information displays and would benefit from these being provided.
- We welcome the applicant's offer within the Transport Statement to contribute towards the delivery of enhanced bus services to be pooled with other contributions, and can advise we would request a contribution of £145,000 (index-linked)

Vehicular routes to/within site

- The Knight Retail Park access road is not public highway, as such, it is unlikely that the highway authority would adopt the internal road network. The applicant should provide proof of access from the public highway (Thaxted Road) to the site boundary.
- Consideration should be given to speed restraint measures on the access road. The Retail Park is sign-posted as 30mph but it is not clear if enforcement is undertaken. As the intention is for the internal street network to be subject to a 20mph speed restriction (as per paragraph 4.36 of the Transport Statement), speed-restraint measures should be located at maximum intervals of 60m, starting within 50m of the entry junction or zone. The applicant should take into consideration the above mentioned planned bus services when designing any speed-restraint measures.
- Accident data is now available to the end of December 2023, so we would request that the applicant update the Road Safety Analysis section of their Transport Statement (as their analysis runs to June 2022). Current accident data can be obtained from: casualtydata@essexhighways.org
- We request that a Stage 1 road safety audit is undertaken, although the access to Thaxted Road and the access road itself is existing, the proposal does involve the formation of an access and an increase in pedestrian, cycle and vehicular traffic on the access road.

Until this information is provided, the highway authority is not in a position to provide a recommendation as we cannot be satisfied that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of highway safety and accessibility.



pp. Director for Highways and Transportation
Enquiries to Rachel McKeown
Internet: www.essex.gov.uk

