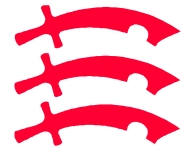


Your Ref: S62A/2024/0075
Our Ref: 57218
Date: 15th May 2025



Essex County Council

Director for Highways
and Transportation

To: Section 62A Applications Team
The Planning Inspectorate
3rd Floor
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Bristol
BS1 6PN

County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1QH

Response to rebuttal letter dated 01/05/25

Application No.	S62A/2024/0075
Applicant	Melanie Summer (Saffron Walden LLP)
Site Location	Land North of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden
Proposal	Reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale); pursuant to outline planning permission ref: S62A/2023/0031 for the erection of up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Highway Authority has considered the points made by the applicant both now as well as at outline planning stage under S62A/2023/0031 application.

The applicant during the life of the outline application questioned the need for condition 20 and invited the inspector at the time to consider the validity of the proposal. In response to this the inspector considered Essex Highways condition and included the following in their decision notice:

The condition suggested by ECC around any future layout and bus turning has been modified in response to the comments of the applicant. In my view it now better reflects the current status of bus service provision and improvements in the area, whilst retaining the ability to implement the principles set out in the TS, which were found acceptable to and by ECC as highway authority.

In response to the specific concerns by the applicant we have the following points to reiterate/offer:

- The Highway Authority is fully aware that the application is that of reserved matters and the bus turning facility was included as a condition attached to the Outline permission (S62A/2023/0031), however it must be noted that we cannot agree details of layout without taking into consideration the need and planning obligation for the developer to deliver this particular facility.
- Should the applicant wish to pursue the removal or amendment of condition 20 attached to S62A/2023/0031 they may do so by following the relevant process, seeing though as this has not taken place yet we are forced to take it into consideration when reviewing the proposals for these reserved matters application.
- With regards to the Local plan this has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for assessment and determination, this is not currently in place, and it must be noted that UDC have not had a local plan in place for over 20 years which is why funding across the district for bus services has been an ad hoc process rather than a planned strategy.
- Irrespective of any future strategic allocations coming forward within the local plan, should this be adopted; it remains a fact that Knight retail park is a destination that needs to be served by public transport.
- As explained previously during the pre-application process with the applicant we had offered various options that were deemed suitable, but we cannot direct the developer's future submissions.
- It must be noted that the developer is appearing keen to completely remove the bus service facility obligation rather than trying to seek alternative amendments that would enable compliance with the condition and subsequently inclusion in their layout and reserved matters application.
- The plan submitted at outline has sections of footways shown and it was at the time indicative demonstrating only the ability of a bus to follow the loop around the development and NOT determining the fine details of the design which was left for the reserved matters application.
- The Highway Authority still considers the shared surface accommodating any bus service inappropriate and unsafe.
- The existing turning head is located at the end of the road at Knights Park where no through traffic or pedestrians are expected, and therefore the bus would perform the turning manoeuvre without posing a hazard for other

highway users and without requirement for a banksman to oversee safe turning. The interaction with delivery vehicles will be minimal and of lower risk as these can be easily seen and identified early, as opposed to a small child playing on a shared surface for example or a cyclist.

- The size of the existing turning head would be investigated and if adjustments were needed to facilitate the bus turning, we would do that in agreement with Knight Park owners. The development proposal has taken away the option for utilising this existing turning facility therefore, the applicant offered at the time to facilitate bus turning movements within their sites' boundary.
- A shared surface in the Essex Design guide is at the lower end of the estate road hierarchy serving up to 25 properties in a cul-de-sac and this would present a low-speed environment that allows pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users to mix, and it is not an environment to accommodate a regular bus service.
- The current proposal would likely result in a hazardous situation where private vehicles and pedestrians would have to negotiate a bus trying to do a three point turn on a residential network with live traffic.
- You can be reassured, that with regards to the upcoming bus services the relevant department has draft timetables and routing for 2 separate services planned to terminate at Knights Retail Park as well as the initial funding to start the service subject to the turning facilities we are now discussing. Further funding for the services has been secured via s106 agreements – including this development - and we are waiting for these to reach their trigger points. Most of these agreements refer to linking the respective developments to key attractors in the area, which translates as any or all of Saffron Walden Town Centre, Knights Retail Park, Audley End Station, Saffron Walden Hospital, Radwinter Road Tescos, Leisure centre, Radwinter Rd Lidl and the Shire Hill employment zone.

The Bus stops within Knights Park are also to be funded/partially funded by this development, as indicated in the relevant S106 agreement associated with S62A/2023/0031.

In conclusion Essex County Council would like to highlight that we have every intension of delivering the bus service in the area via already secured funds; the bus service turning facility should still be provided by the developer as agreed at outline stage, however we need to stress that this needs to be achieved in a safe and suitable manner and not to the detriment of Highway safety for all users.

The current proposal is contrary to NPPF paragraph 116 due to its unacceptable impact on Highway Safety, and contrary to NPPF paragraph 117 (c)whereby - applications for development should: c) create places that are

safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, therefore, our recommendation issued 16th April 2025 still stands until a suitable solution has been provided.



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pp. Director for Highways and Transportation
Enquiries to Eirini Spyratou