

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD –9TH OCTOBER 2013

UPDATE TO AGENDA

APPLICATION NO.

13/3210N

LOCATION

Land East of 22 Heathfield Road, Audlem, CW3 0HH.

UPDATE PREPARED

7th October 2013

CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

United Utilities:

Still awaiting a response.

Education:

Still awaiting a response.

Highways:

There have been discussions between the developers and the Strategic Highways Manager. These clarified that his main concerns were with conflict with plots 19 and 20 and not 13-18 as stated in the report. A subsequent amended plan has been submitted showing access to these dwellings from opposite the bowling green and the creation of a passing place on Mill Lane.

Therefore the recommendation should be changed accordingly to refer to plots 19 and 20.

REPRESENTATIONS:

Representations have been received from a Neighbourhood Residents Association. Their objections focus on issues related to highway safety and they have also submitted traffic survey data and road width measurements. Their objections are copied below.

“East Cheshire Planning application 13/3210N

Land East of Heathfield Road, Audlem CW3 0HH

For attention of Philippa Cockroft, Planning Officer

Letter of objection submitted by: Neighbourhood Residents Association

Interest in application: a group of 29 householders immediately adjacent, or very close, to the site

This letter of objection focuses specifically on the unsuitability of adjacent highways. In particular it provides data to support the argument that:

- a) Heathfield Road will carry at least 75% of the site traffic, so should be the focus for judging the suitability of adjacent highways*
- b) The unsuitability of Heathfield Road for additional traffic*

Heathfield Road will carry at least 75% of site traffic

Paragraph 3.3 & 3.4 of the Transport Statement (prepared by SCP Transportation Planning for the applicant) indicate that vehicular access to the site will be provided at the point of the existing junction of Heathfield Road and Hillary Drive, with the road from the site to Hillary Drive assuming priority. Paragraph 3.8 states the width of the proposed carriageway matches that of Hillary Drive (para 2.5). Within the vicinity of the site frontage, Heathfield Road is stated (para 2.4) to have a carriageway width of approximately 4m with no street lighting or footways. Though not stated, the implication of the above is that site traffic will predominantly use Hillary Drive, as opposed to Heathfield Road.

We challenge the statement of Heathfield Road's width (see later) and the assumption site traffic will use Hillary Drive We assert that at least 75% of the traffic will use Heathfield Road, for the following reasons:

Whichever direction one is headed to or from the site, the shortest way is via Heathfield Road.

- a) North: Heathfield Road junction with A529 (Nantwich Road)*

Direct: 421m

Via Hillary Drive: 641m

- b) East: Heathfield Road junction with A525 (Woore Road)*

Direct: 253m

Via Hillary Drive 950m

- c) Audlem Square (for routes south & west)*

via Heathfield Road (south) and Stafford Street 558m

via Hillary Drive and Cheshire Street 645m

From the above, it is clear all north and east bound traffic will use Heathfield Road.

For village, south and west traffic, the shorter distance argument, though valid, is not likely to be over-riding. A secondary consideration will be the traffic bottlenecks at Cheshire Street junction with the Square (caused by parked cars) and Stafford Street as it passes the church.

A survey undertaken at the Buttermarket at 8-9am and 2.45pm- 3.45pm on Tuesday 17 September quantifies the problem:

	No. of stoppages	Cars passing after stoppage
8-9am		
Vehicles entering Cheshire St	15	2.1
Vehicles entering Stafford St	16	1.8
2.45-3.45pm		
Vehicles entering Cheshire St	34	1.8
Vehicles entering Stafford St	8	1.8

The figures strongly suggest that during shopping hours site traffic heading to/from the south and west would use Stafford Street and Heathfield Road and that at other times would use both routes equally, in absence of all other considerations.

The only other significant issue is road junctions. The junction of Heathfield Road and Stafford Street is unquestionably more difficult and dangerous than the Broadways (Hillary Drive) Cheshire Street junction, encouraging use of the latter, all other things being equal.

Taking all factors into consideration, it is asserted that all traffic heading north and east will use Heathfield Road exclusively, as will around 50% of that heading south and west. As to relative traffic volumes, no direct measurements could be made. However, with motorways and the major centres of employment being accessed via the north and east exits from Audlem, it is likely that well over 50% of traffic will use those routes. Taken together the above imply that at least 75% of site traffic will use Heathfield Road, as opposed to Hillary Drive.

With such high traffic flow on Heathfield Road, the key planning consideration must be the suitability of Heathfield Road for significant additional traffic, not the presence, or quality, of a road junction on to Hillary Drive or the fact that once exited from Heathfield Road, development traffic would only result in small increases in traffic flow.*

** Hillary Drive itself is also an unsuitable road for additional traffic. It is a traffic calmed residential road, with all properties being bungalows lived in almost exclusively by retired individuals (11 of the 13 householders) many of whom are infirm.*

Unsuitability of Heathfield Road for significant additional traffic

a) Inadequate physical attributes

The arguments relating to the inadequacy of Heathfield Road are well documented, but, for completeness, are repeated.

The planning application, by proposing an access road carriageway of 5.5m width and two 2m wide footways, tacitly supports such dimensions as being necessary for safe, uninterrupted traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Heathfield Road falls way short of such standards:

- *Inadequate width. Paragraph 2.4 of the SCP Transport Statement states that “within the vicinity of the site frontage, Heathfield Road has a carriageway width of approximately 4.0m”. This overstates the actual width. Measurements made on 19 September along the 275m narrow length from the school boundary to the junction with Mill Lane show the following:*
 - *Average width = 3.56m (26 measurements at approximately 10m intervals)*
 - *Approximately 70% of the length (18 of the 26 measurements) is less than 4.0m, with an average width of 3.28m*

Were it not for the use of entrances to residents’ drives, vehicles would be unable to pass along a substantial part of the road in question.

- *Poor accesses to main roads. Access to Stafford Street is both poor and dangerous, given its incline and blind right hand turn. Access to Cheshire Street goes past the narrowest point of the road and St James Primary School.*
- *For approximately 255m from the junction with Mill Lane to just south of the school boundary, there are no pavements at any point (nor as an aside, anywhere in Salford). Absence of pavements creates high accident risk for pedestrians in general and children & the elderly in particular. The presence of the school and that fact that 23 of 34 adjacent properties (including those in Hillary Drive) are occupied by retired residents (a significant number of whom are very old) raises the accident risk further. In consequence, the application fails to meet Policy Tran 3 of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, which requires appropriate provision to be made for pedestrians and creating safe routes for school.*

b) Excessive vehicle volumes

The SCP Transport Statement (para 5.5) asserts that the maximum number of vehicular trips arising from the proposed development “will be 18 in the morning and 19 in the evening peak hour” and that “the traffic impact of the development will be imperceptible and will not have a material impact on the operation or safety of the proposed highway”. Both statements are contested strongly.

The sites from which the SCP vehicle numbers are projected are all suburban. Audlem, is patently not suburban. Rather, it is a village, with no significant local employment, or frequent public transport. The style and nature of housing proposed is likely to be acquired predominantly by working families, whose employment will be predominantly outside the village. With the vast majority of the 36 planned households requiring 2 cars, it is inconceivable that trip generation will be as low as that projected.

It is noted that the Strategic Highways Managers's submission indicates a peak hour traffic of 24 trips two way. Though this still 'feels' low, such a number would generate 18 (75% of 24) trips via Heathfield Road. In isolation, such a number sounds small. However, any question of harm arising from the increase must be set in the context of existing traffic. It would patently be absurd to keep adding increments of 36 houses and argue each time that the increase was immaterial.

A survey has been undertaken to quantify peak time traffic and pedestrian flow.

Location: junction of Heathfield Road & Hillary Drive

Recording time & date	Total vehicles	Vehicles stopped	Pedestrians & cycles
8-9am			
Monday 11 September	57	9	25
Wednesday 13	74	6	21
Friday 15	62	8	16
Average	64	8	21
2.45 -3.45pm			
Monday 11 September	54	3	16
Wednesday 13	61	6	4
Friday 15	71	18	10
Average	62	9	10

Footnotes:

- 1)Data include travel both straight along Heathfield Road and Heathfield Road / Hillary Drive*
- 2) 2.45pm to 3.45pm selected as afternoon peak, to encompass school leaving time*
- 3) Wednesday and Friday afternoon
both wet*
- 4) Approximately 42% of length of Heathfield Road between Mill Lane & Monks Lane visible from junction with Hillary Drive (the length where traffic hold ups likely to occur)*

Vehicle throughput for the three days was relatively consistent at an average of 63 vehicles per hour. Stoppages, because of the narrowness of the road

(passing typically occurred by one vehicle pulling into a drive entrance) varied more, being dependent on the timing of movements in opposing directions. As they stand, the stoppage statistics (average 8.5 per hour) under-record total stoppages; from the survey point only 43% of the likely stoppage length can be seen (Heathfield Road between the junctions at Mill Lane and Monks Lane, just north of the school entrance) implying nearer 20 stoppages in total, which approximates to one-third of peak-time movements.

Morning pedestrian traffic is substantial at an average of 21 pedestrians; afternoon less so. However it was raining on the second and third afternoons recorded, so perhaps the first day tally of 16 is more representative.

The narrow length of Heathfield Road (from the bottom to the school) numbers 21 properties. Pro-rating the Strategic Highways Manager's CEC trip figures, one would expect peak hour traffic to number 14 trips ($24 \times 21 / 36$). At 63 trips, peak hour traffic in Heathfield Road is already 4.5 times that which it would generate of its own accord ($63 / 14$). Approval of the planning application would increase peak flow by 29% ($18 / 63$) to 81 vehicles, almost 6 times ($81 / 14$) the flow expected to be generated by current residents.

The stoppage data shown above shows that Heathfield Road already struggles to cope with existing traffic, never mind any substantial addition, and the fact that it does is dependent upon the goodwill of residents allowing passing vehicles to stop in the entrances to their driveways.

The risks of injury to pedestrians, already substantial because of the 255m of pavementless road, will be increased by 90% by the projected increase in vehicle and pedestrian numbers ($(21 + 10) / 21 \times 81 / 63$). Such a substantial increase must be deemed to be harmful.

Summary

The above data comprehensively contradicts the statement "the traffic impact of the development will be imperceptible and will not have a material impact on the operation or safety of the proposed highway". Rather an increase in traffic flow to almost 6 times that which the current residents would be expected to generate themselves and a near doubling of the risk to pedestrian safety significantly increases the potential for harm, to pedestrians in particular, which already exists from the current level of traffic flow.

Accordingly, it is argued, on highway unsuitability alone, the planning application be rejected, unless highway improvements are made to Heathfield Road that will allow freer flow of traffic and pavements provided that will reduce the injury risk to pedestrians."

Recommendation: Amend the second reason for refusal as follows:

The proposed access to plots 19 and 20, on Mill Lane is not suitable for further development. The proposal would therefore have a significant adverse impact on highway safety. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy BE.3 (Access and Parking) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.