

Committee Report

Amy Aspinal

Application 09/1582W

Location: LAND WEST OF ALDERLEY EDGE AND NETHER ALDERLEY, A34 ALDERLEY EDGE/NETHER ALDERLEY BYPASS, ALDERLEY EDGE, CHESHIRE EAST

Proposal: THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS ARE IN ADDITION TO THE PRESENT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A34 ALDERLEY EDGE AND NETHER ALDERLEY BYPASS (APPLICATION NO 5/03/1846P) 1) MITIGATION EARTHWORKS MOUNDING, 2) REPROFILING ADJACENT FIELDS, 3) AMENDMENTS TO BRIDGE DETAILS, 4) DRAINAGE PUMPING STATIONS, 5) RELOCATION OF PONDS, 6) AMENDMENTS TO CARRIAGEWAY LEVELS..

Applicant: MR PHIL SHERRATT, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Expiry Date: 23-Sep-2009

Date Report Prepared: 16th September 2009

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

Landscape and Visual Impact

Noise

Ecology

REASON FOR REPORT

In line with Cheshire East Council protocol the application has been referred to the Strategic Planning Board as the application site is greater than two hectares.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS

The current application relates to proposed amendments to the A34 Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley Bypass scheme which was granted planning approval in December 2003 (application 5/03/1846P). The application relates

to changes to discrete elements of the approved scheme arising from firstly the 2005 Public Inquiry held into the compulsory purchase of land and the side road closure order at which recommendations were made to improve landscape mitigation and footbridge provision; and secondly the detailed design process which indicated the need for additional allowance for drainage features including pumping stations and relocation of ponds.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The purpose of the bypass is to provide a new through route for A34 principal road traffic which will relieve traffic congestion on the existing A34 thereby improving environmental conditions in the villages of Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley. Upon completion (anticipated Summer 2011), the bypass will be a 5.1 km two lane single carriageway commencing at the existing A34 Wilmslow Road roundabout at Harden Park to the North of Alderley Edge, and ending at the proposed roundabout junction to rejoin the existing A34 Congleton Road, South of Nether Alderley.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposals include the following:

(1) Mitigation earthworks mounding (2) Re-profiling fields adjacent to the bypass in the vicinity of Wilton Crescent (3) Amendments to bridge details (4) Drainage pumping stations (5) Relocation of ponds (6) Amendments to carriageway levels (7) Footbridge over bypass to connect Footpath 33 (Nether Alderley).

RELEVANT HISTORY

Implemented planning permission 5/03/1846P 'A34 Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley Bypass' which is currently under construction. All pre-commencement schemes were approved in November 2008.

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy (NW)

DP1 Spatial Principles

RT1 Management of Highway Network

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policy

NE3 Landscape Protection and Enhancement

NE11 Nature Conservation

NE17 Nature Conservation

DC1 Design – New Build

GC1 Green Belt – New Buildings
GC2 Green Belt – Other Operations and Changes of Use
GC3 Green Belt – Visual Amenity
T7 Integrated Transport Policy
DC3 Amenity
DC9 Tree Protection

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG2 Green Belt
PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

(Internal)

Highways:

No objection - however the Highway Engineer is the applicant.

Environmental Health:

No objection

Environmental Protection:

Comments that the potential noise impacts due to the proposed changes in road alignment are counteracted by the corresponding changes in the mitigation mounding. The required acoustic barrier heights have been maintained. As a result, would not expect there to be any measurable changes in the road sourced noise levels at sensitive receptors and therefore no noise impacts. Any construction noise impacts are controlled by the existing conditions.

Landscape:

No objection

Ecology:

No objection.

No additional significant adverse impacts anticipated. Conditions recommended to ensure the appropriate management of the scheme and to protect breeding birds.

Forestry:

No objection.

Comments that the two trees (TR113 and 004) identified for removal have already been felled. The redesigned Wilmslow/Alderley Edge roundabout in its elliptical form with associated hard-standing compromised the retention of both trees. To provide an identifiable net landscape gain for the loss of the two trees, additional landscaping should be implemented within the immediate area associated with the tree loss. This could be set back from any site lines and would require the involvement of the highway engineers. In terms of arboricultural conditions those identified and attached to the previously approved application should prevail.

Public Rights of Way

No objection

(External)

Environment Agency:

No objection to the stated application. However, would expect details of any amendments to work included in land drainage consents be submitted to the Environment Agency for approval.

Manchester Airport:

No objections subject to a condition minimising the potential for bird strike.

Network Rail:

No objection in principle to the development, however due to its close proximity to the operational railway requests a condition for the applicant to contact the OPE to ensure the safety, operational needs and integrity of the railway.

United Utilities:

No objection to the proposal in principle. Provides standard advice relating to development in close proximity to the water mains.

National Grid:

No objection to the proposal. Provides standard advice to the applicant regarding a major accident hazard pipeline and Intermediate Pressure apparatus in the vicinity.

Ramblers Association (East Cheshire Group):

Supportive of the planning application particularly the footbridge to carry Footpath 33 (Nether Alderley) over the bypass.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Alderley Edge Parish Council:

Issues raised in relation to noise, drainage detail and proposed restrictions on hours of work in proximity to Wilton Crescent.

Nether Alderley Parish Council:

The Parish Council objects to the application. Issues raised in relation to the landscaping scheme throughout Nether Alderley with particular reference to the Parish Council's request for: more offsite planting for Heawood Hall and use of acoustic fencing at the top of mounding; planting mix E to be provided between CH 2600 (west side) and the underpass (west side) and Sand Lane (east side), including planting compartments CE 30 & CE32. Concern raised regarding proposed footbridge in Green Belt location and the break in the mounding to provide access for Walton Farm – suggests staggered planting.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

As part of the consultation process the application was advertised by way of press notices, site notices, and neighbour notification letters within 400 metres of the application site. A number of letters of representation have been received from local residents and 12 objections. NARPA (Nether Alderley Rural Protection Association) has objected to the application. The majority of objections received relate to the landscaping scheme in proximity to Sand Lane. The main issues raised are summarised below and will be addressed in the section entitled 'Officer Appraisal'.

The following issues have been raised:

Plantings opposite Sand Lane:

The majority of objections received are from local residents of Sand Lane. The issues raised relate to the level of screening provided for these properties and the associated visual intrusion from HGVs and vehicle lighting. Particular reference is made to the proposed planting mixes in planting compartments CE 30 and CE 32 and the requested change to mix E.

Under-bridge Parapets:

Parapets should be changed from aluminium in colour to green.

Northern end of bypass towards Harden Park roundabout:

Impact of the carriageway realignment on traffic noise for nearby houses.

Section of bypass in vicinity of Brook Lane (Alderley Edge):

Several letters of representation have been received from local residents of Brook Lane and Wilton Crescent including 2 objections relating to specific elements of the application: relocated detention basin and lack of mitigation screening; amendments to carriageway levels and lack of mounding; realigned cycleway. Main issues raised relate to the impacts of additional noise, headlight intrusion, visual intrusion, loss of privacy and loss of quiet enjoyment.

Congleton Road area (Alderley Edge) (No. 22 and Hill Cottage)

Two letters of representation have been received in relation to the noise and visual impact of the section of bypass in proximity to Congleton Road, Alderley Edge (No. 22 and Hill Cottage). It has also been suggested by one local resident that the conservation ponds in area 9 are relocated to the other side of the bypass

Section of bypass in vicinity of Heawood Hall properties

An objection has been raised to the amendments of the original plans due to lack of mounding, screening and planting. Requests consideration of acoustic fencing along the top of mounding.

Application is EIA development

A representation received considers that the application is EIA development and therefore should be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Supporting Statement

Drawings from the 2003 Application (for information purposes)

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The principle of the A34 Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley bypass was accepted under planning permission 05/03/1846P which was granted in 2003. The aim of the proposal was to create an environmental bypass in order to offer a transport solution to the traffic problems in the two villages of Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley with the aim of reducing traffic, improving safety and reducing vehicle/pedestrian conflict whilst improving environmental conditions. Policy T4 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan supports the implementation of the bypass and safeguards the route as shown on the proposals map from development. The principle of the bypass in the Green Belt has been accepted and the proposals contained within the current application are intrinsically linked.

Changes to Carriageway Levels

Changes to carriageway levels have been proposed mainly as a result of detailed drainage design as described in the supporting statement which accompanies the application. There are five main sections along the route of the bypass where changes to the road level are proposed, these are identified by reference to the distance from the start of the northern section of the road. CH 0.0 – 200.0 therefore refers to the chainage between 0.0, i.e. the start of the road to chainage point CH 200.0 which is 200 metres from the start. The five sections lie between chainage points: (i) CH 0.0 – 200.0 (ii) CH 920.0 – 1750.0 (iii) CH 1850.0 – 2950.0 (iv) CH 2950.0 – 4010.0 (v) CH 4750.0 – 5000.0

(i) CH 0.0 – 200.0 The road levels change slightly along this short section to tie in with the roundabout and to achieve increased deflection on the approach to the give way. The changes in this area relate to the vertical alignment which is relatively minor and also to the horizontal alignment which has moved eastwards slightly. Apart from the approved landscaping scheme and retention of noise fencing, no additional mitigation is proposed in the current application.

(ii) CH 920.0 – 1750.0 As the road comes out of cutting at Brook Lane CH 920.0) and approaches the Chelford Road cutting, the road level is steadily raised until it becomes a maximum of approximately 1 metre above the approved levels between CH 1500.0 and 1600.0, although this is below the existing ground level. Generally the level change up to CH 1500.0 is below 1 metre, which is considered to be relatively minor. In addition, mitigation mounding in this area has been raised accordingly so that the change will have a resultant negligible impact both visually and in terms of noise.

(iii) CH 1880.0 – 2950.0 It is proposed to lower the carriageway levels along this section below the approved levels in order to further reduce the impact of the road on surrounding properties / receptors. The maximum change is in the region of around 1.5 metres below approved levels, with CH 1850.0 – 2700.0 being below existing ground level. Lowering the road level in this area will significantly reduce the visual impact of the road, in addition to the new mitigation mounding provision in areas 10, 11 and 12. The approved scheme does not contain mounding in the aforementioned areas. It is considered that the lowering of the carriageway in along this section is desirable in the interests of providing an enhanced package of mitigation over and above the previously approved scheme which will significantly reduce the effects of noise and visual intrusion in this area.

(iv) CH 2950.0 – 4010.0 The road levels along this section are intended to be raised above the original approved levels. The level change reaches up to around 2 metres, but is variable along the length. From CH 2950.0 – 3300.0 the road level is raised above existing ground levels, but between CH 3300.0 - 3900.0 remains below the existing ground level in cutting. The raised levels are due to detailed drainage design in the Welsh Row area and to pass over

the culverts. From CH 2950.0 – 3300.0 where the road level will be raised above the approved levels and existing ground levels, new mitigation mounding has been provided in areas 11 and 12 which compensate for the increase in road level in terms of providing an acoustic barrier and visual mitigation. It is considered that the additional mounding and planting in this area will provide an appropriate level of mitigation.

(v) CH 4750.0 – 5000.0 The road levels have been raised slightly along this short section in order to tie in to the road levels on the existing A34. The change in level is relatively minor at around 0.5 metres and is likely to have a negligible impact given the provision of new mitigation mounding in areas 17 (on approach to Frog Lane roundabout) and 18 which will be a minimum of 2 metres in height. Additional mitigation would be afforded by the provision of screen planting also.

Impact on Noise

Concerns have been raised regarding the changes in road levels and the impact upon noise. These concerns mainly relate to the section of carriageway in the vicinity of Brook Lane. Alderley Edge Parish Council has commented about noise levels and asked if the levels committed to at the Public Inquiry will be achieved, including the specific detail of noise reduction. Within this area the raising of the carriageway is accompanied by raised mounding and therefore the changes to noise level will be negligible as opposed to being reduced. For background purposes the noise levels which were assessed as part of the approved scheme were considered to be acceptable in line with the mitigation package proposed at the time. It is not anticipated that noise levels would increase as a result of the proposed amendments. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has assessed the application in relation to noise and is satisfied that the required acoustic barrier heights have been maintained and therefore would not anticipate any measurable changes in road sourced noise at sensitive receptors. The amended mitigation scheme including increased heights in mounding, new mounding areas, and landscaping are reflective of the changes in road level along sections of the route and accordingly it is not anticipated that the changes would amount to any further significant adverse impacts associated with noise than those that will be experienced within the approved scheme.

At CH 0.0 – 200.0 the approach alignment of the road has been flattened out along this section. Concern has been raised that this would bring the bypass considerably closer to nearby properties which will experience an increase in noise levels. The change will bring the road approximately 6 metres closer to the property known as Brynwood, however this is still some 70 metres in distance from the road. A belt of screen planting and hedgerow will be provided here in addition to the retention of noise fencing at this point. The change will also bring the development closer to the row of houses adjacent to the roundabout junction along Wilmslow Road by approximately 20 metres. These properties will still be over 100 metres in distance from the bypass and are located on the opposite side of Wilmslow Road. It is however, anticipated

that the new bypass will remove traffic from Wilmslow Road thus reducing the existing noise impact at the façade of these properties. In addition, the length of the bypass on the eastern side will be landscaped with screen planting which will provide mitigation against the adverse impacts of noise arising from the road. It is considered unlikely that changes to the road alignment along this section will significantly increase noise levels above the predicted levels at these properties.

Landscape Scheme and Visual Impact

Planting Compartments 30 & 32 and Sand Lane area

Particular concern has been raised regarding planting compartments CE30 and CE32 which relate to areas 15 and 16 on plan PC/10096/02/44 (although CE32 is not fully within the current application area). The main issue relates to the planting mix currently proposed in CE30 which is Mix B and CE32 which is Mix H. A number of objections/representations have been received, particularly from the residences of Sand Lane, requesting that the planting mixes in these compartments are changed to Mix E which incorporates a 60% evergreen mix, in order to provide the best possible mitigation for Sand Lane in the winter/spring seasons. Reference has also been made that planting compartment CE33 proposes Mix E which will provide screening for just one property (Bentley House) whereas screening at Sand Lane is for 10 properties. Nether Alderley Parish Council has requested confirmation that a high percentage of Scots Pine is being used from the Frog Lane roundabout along the Nether Alderley route. The Parish Council requests that planting Mix E is required from CH 2600 to Sand Lane.

The landscape scheme, both as approved and as amended, has been developed within the constraints of screening need, landscape character, semi-natural habitat creation and anticipated growing conditions. The planting mixes proposed in each compartment of the scheme have been chosen based on the mitigation needs of the area, site conditions, and to create visual interest and landscape variety. Mix E (mix with the greatest % of evergreen (including Scots Pine) compared to other mixes) has been introduced to targeted areas along the route (including offsite areas) where higher levels of visual intrusion exist. Planting compartments CE29 and CE31 have been amended in the current application (Memo received 1st July 2009) to incorporate planting mix E as a result of discussions with local residents. The applicant does not propose to alter the planting mixes of CE30 and CE32 due to a number of reasons which will be discussed below.

Compartment CE30 does not solely provide screening for Sand Lane, but is also the proposed location for the conservation ponds. As an area of conservation there is a requirement to create as natural an environment as possible to encourage wildlife into this area in line with the ecological and landscape mitigation plan. Mix E is not appropriate in this location for ecological reasons and would not be conducive to the creation of an ideal habitat for amphibians which is the main purpose of the conservation ponds.

Accordingly, a more native broadleaved woodland mix is proposed here. Discussions have been held with the Landscape Officer in relation to the screening benefit of compartments CE30 and CE32 for Sand Lane properties and it has been resolved that they should remain as proposed. Furthermore, CE32 is not wholly within the current application area.

From a visual perspective, the properties along Sand Lane were identified as having a 'Slight to Negligible' level of visual intrusion as a result of the approved bypass scheme, as determined by the Visual Impact Assessment in the Environmental Statement which accompanied the original application (5/03/1846P). Sand Lane benefits from substantial screening measures including an offsite woodland belt containing a percentage of Scots Pine; a native hedgerow along the south bank of Sand Lane; enhanced/new mitigation mounding; and screen planting. It is considered that the landscape proposals contained within this application will provide appropriate screening for the properties located along Sand Lane. The enhanced screening benefit for properties along Sand Lane associated with changing the planting mix in CE30 and CE32 to Mix E is seen to be minimal when considering the presence of other mitigation measures which will have a much greater mitigating effect. Compartment CE30 will also contain integrated mounding which is shown to reach a height of 3.03 metres at CH 4050 which will provide an immediate form of mitigation in addition to the presence of screening along most of the length of the road in this area. It is therefore not considered that the perceived screening benefit of planting compartment CE30 outweighs the ecological aims of area 15.

With reference to Bentley House, this property is substantially closer to the bypass and therefore the effects of the road are likely to be far more significant than those experienced at Sand Lane. Additional mounding has been provided in area 18 in response to recommendations from the Public Inquiry and also due to the conservation ponds that were originally proposed here being relocated to area 15 and thus creating adequate land provision. The mounding in this area and the extent of planting containing Mix E (including CE35) is a targeted area which will also provide screening for The Lodge and views from Chelford Road.

In response to the comments from Nether Alderley Parish Council to confirm that a high percentage of Scots Pine is being used from the Frog Lane roundabout along the Nether Alderley route and their request that planting Mix E is required from CH 2600 to Sand Lane; the plans clearly identify the planting mixes proposed in the amended areas which form part of this application. Plans PC10096/21/42 (3 of 4) and PC/10096/21/42 (4 of 4) show that the proposed planting mixes comprise of Mix H, M, C, B, G and E along this section of the route throughout Nether Alderley. These mixes will function to deliver the most appropriate mitigation and native woodland resource along the route and therefore this does not entail that a high percentage of Scots Pine will be used in all planting mixes. Mix E is used in targeted screening areas and to introduce this planting mix along the length of the route throughout Nether Alderley would be inappropriate and would not achieve the overall design objectives of the landscape scheme. Mix E contains 45 %

Scots Pine which is not a locally indigenous species, and therefore its overuse must be avoided so as not to appear alien and obtrusive in the landscape once it becomes established. The widespread use of Mix E throughout the bypass route would reduce the environmental and ecological benefits of the scheme. The Council's Landscape Officer or Ecologist would not support a scheme which intensifies the presence of non indigenous species in the Nether Alderley landscape. Policy NE3 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan also provides that preference will be given to the use of native species and it is considered that the current proposals accord with this policy.

Heawood Hall area

Comments have also been received which raise concern about the detail of the landscaping scheme in the proximity to Heawood Hall residences due to the lack of mounding, screening and planting. It has also been suggested that further off-site planting is required to protect Heawood Houses to a similar level to that being provided for Sand Lane properties and that fencing needs to be provided along the top of the mounding. Within the Heawood Hall area there is very little change proposed in terms of the vertical alignment of the road. Additional mounding is however proposed in areas 14 and 17 including changes to planting mix, which will provide enhanced mitigation for these properties. Off site planting is not proposed and cannot be considered as part of this application. In spite of this the Landscape Officer does not consider further offsite planting to be necessary. In addition, acoustic fencing is not proposed along the top of the approved mounding in proximity to the Heawood Hall complex or the new mounding further south. The provision of acoustic fencing will be in accordance with the approved scheme (5/03/1846P) and will be located in those targeted areas which were identified in the original Environmental Statement as being within noise intervention levels. The noise levels at the Heawood Hall complex were assessed as being below the intervention levels and as such acoustic fencing is not warranted in this location.

In relation to the provision of new mounding in area 17, a height of around 2 - 2.7 metres is achieved along this length. Where the road level is raised slightly (generally 0.5 metres) on its approach to Frog Lane roundabout, this is compensated by the mitigation mounding. The approved scheme does not contain any mounding in this area. It is considered that the mounding proposed is acceptable and will offer a greater level of mitigation to sensitive receptors in the locality compared to the original scheme.

Access provided for Walton Farm

An access is provided to the bypass for Walton Farm as part of the approved scheme due to the road severing this holding. In order to maintain this access a gap is provided in the new mounding. Nether Alderley Parish Council has suggested that staggered tree planting would be appropriate to provide screening in this area as a result of the break in the mounding. It is acknowledged that the approach of the road is raised in this area however mounding has been provided to mitigate any impacts of noise and visual

intrusion. This would result in the omission of a small area of landscaping which is considered to be relatively minor given the distance to surrounding properties and the requirement to provide a safe entry/exit from the bypass.

Brook Lane area

Comments have been received with regard to the landscaping scheme in the proximity of Brook Lane and the impact on residences such as visual intrusion and noise, in relation to the current proposals. In view of the changes to the road levels in this area it has been suggested that further banking should be provided on the North side of the road in the location of the pond. The reasoning behind the detention basin in this area is due to a locational requirement to be in close proximity to the pumping station. This will be discussed further in the section titled 'drainage'. The mounding in the current application generally follows that contained in the approved scheme. For example, a 3 metre high mound is maintained on the east side of the carriageway and a 1 metre high mound is maintained on the west. In addition to the approved landscaping scheme, this level of mitigation was considered to be acceptable in the original application when assessing the impacts of the road upon neighbouring properties. Where the road levels have been increased in the current proposals, mounding has been raised accordingly so as to ensure a negligible change in noise and visual impact. Additional mounding has also been provided on the West side of the road where it passes under Brook Lane.

An access road is however provided from the bypass through the mounding to the detention basin for maintenance purposes. Due to this the landscaping scheme has been amended to screen the access and the re-located detention basin as affectively as possible given site constraints. An objection has been received regarding this detail and has commented that the current proposals will show a lot of water/road in this area which should be blended in further. When considering the presence of existing screening and proposed mitigation in the form of planting and mounding it is not considered that the current application would present a significant disadvantage to residents along Brook Lane in terms of visual intrusion from the road when compared to the approved scheme. With regards to the presence of water bodies to the south of Brook Lane, an existing pond is already present in this location although it will be moved slightly west due to it being too close to the road cutting, and a detention basin was part of the original scheme, although again this has been relocated further south. The principle of a detention basin in proximity to Brook Lane has already been accepted and it is not considered that the new location and available views of the ponds would present an unacceptable detrimental impact on visual amenity for residents along Brook Lane. When compared to the approved scheme of landscaping, the proposed amendments in this area are not significant.

Congleton Road area (Alderley Edge) (No. 22 and Hill Cottage)

Two letters of representation have been received in relation to the noise and visual impact of the section of bypass in proximity to Congleton Road,

Alderley Edge (No. 22 and Hill Cottage). It has also been suggested by one local resident that the conservation ponds in area 9 are relocated to the other side of the bypass. It should be noted that within this area along the section of the bypass from CH 1850.0 – 2950.0 (PC/10096/02/43) the road level has been lowered from the approved levels and a greater level of mitigation is provided by introducing 2 metre high (approx) mounding along this length in addition to screen planting. The approved scheme does not provide mitigation mounding in this area. The location of the conservation ponds in area 9 relates to the approved scheme and there would be no justification in relocating them to the other side of the road. Furthermore, the properties located along the northern part of Congleton Road are over some 900 metres in distance from the bypass and in any case the current proposals would offer a significant improvement on the level of mitigation provided in the approved scheme.

General

Changes to the approved landscaping scheme are proposed to reflect the current proposals and to provide an acceptable level of mitigation. The Council's Landscape Officer has assessed the application and would offer no objection to the proposals in terms of landscape and visual impact. It is considered that the landscaping proposals contained within the current application (and those previously approved) meet the design objectives of the scheme and allow the current proposals to be accommodated into the landscape successfully. It is accepted that initially the development will have a greater impact on some areas more than others due to proximity to the proposals. This is a point which was accepted in the original application and therefore remains relevant to the current application also. The landscaping scheme has been designed to provide an appropriate level of visual mitigation which would be reinforced over time as vegetation matures and the scheme blends in with the landscape.

Drainage

Pumping Stations and relocated Detention Basins

The application contains proposals for three pumping stations. The pumping stations are required for the purposes of surface water drainage and existing United Utilities sewer drainage.

In respect of highways drainage, detailed design has resolved that where the bypass passes beneath Brook Lane and Welsh Row, pumping stations are now required. This is due to the cuttings being below existing ground level which means that surface water will need to be pumped up to the detention basins before being discharged into the local watercourses. The pumps to facilitate this operation will be below ground and within the carriageway verge; however the controls will be housed in a kiosk which will be visible above ground. The proposals also include the relocation of two detention basins which were approved under the original application (5/03/1846P) as part of

the original drainage design philosophy. Detailed design, in addition to other matters, has resulted in the location of these detention basins being amended. The detention basin at Brook Lane has been moved further south due to the presence of a more recently constructed pond and to more easily facilitate discharging the water into the local watercourse; and the detention basin at Welsh Row has been moved to the east side of the carriageway also for the above latter reason.

During the consultation process an objection has been raised in relation to the location of the detention basin at Brook Lane. It has been commented that this should be given over to additional mitigation landscaping and mounding in order to reduce the visual impact of the bypass scheme on properties along Brook Lane. As discussed above, the detention basin is a fundamental element of the drainage philosophy of the road scheme and there is a locational requirement for the basin to be in close proximity to the pumping stations, which in turn need to be located near to where the road passes 'in cutting'. Area 5 (as annotated on plan PC/10096/02/43) is highly constrained given the location of an existing pond and the suitability of land adjacent to the Brook Lane cutting / underpass. The amendments to the landscaping scheme in the current application provide a higher level of screening in this area than the original approved scheme; screen planting with a 60% evergreen content is proposed here which is considered to provide appropriate mitigation in this targeted area.

It has also been raised that the detention basin would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Whilst the development of the bypass would result in two ponds being located adjacent to each other, it is considered that the visual impact will be short term, and will lessen once the landscaping scheme becomes established. A plan has been provided by a local resident indicating an area which encompasses the basin for further mounding and tree planting, however there is an operational requirement for the Environment Agency to have access to this area for maintenance purposes and therefore there is limited opportunity to enhance the landscaping scheme in this area further. It must also be noted that discussions have been held with the Landscape Officer who has commented that the scheme as proposed is acceptable in terms of landscape and visual impact.

Kiosks

Three pumping station kiosks are required as part of the drainage scheme for the bypass in order to house the controls. The kiosks will be 5 m long by 3 m wide by 3 m high and will be constructed from Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) coloured green. At Brook Lane the kiosk will be located within the highway verge and will be screened by the proposed landscaping scheme in this area. The remaining kiosks will be located at Welsh Row. The United Utilities kiosk will be located within a compound which is a requirement of the operator; and the other will be situated adjacent to the detention basin (refer to plans PC/10096/13/50 'Brook Lane & Welsh Row Pumping Station and Pond Location Plan').

PPG2 provides that buildings are inappropriate development in the Green Belt unless they fall within the criteria as laid out in this policy. The kiosks do not meet the criteria and are therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However it is considered that very special circumstances can be demonstrated as they are a fundamental part of the drainage scheme for the bypass. In respect of the impact of the proposal on visual amenity, the pumping stations and kiosks have a locational requirement to be in close proximity to the specific road cuttings (Brook Lane and Welsh Row) and the foul sewer diversion (Welsh Row). The pumping stations at Welsh Row will have a greater impact on the visual amenity of the Green belt given that the Brook Lane kiosk will be located within the highway verge; and at Welsh Row the developable area will extend in closer proximity to the Gately Green farm complex. The reasoning behind the drainage proposals however presents very special circumstances which are considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The boundary to the compound area will be planted to provide screening for nearby properties and to reduce the visual impact of the development. The design and appearance of the kiosks is considered to be acceptable with reference to policy DC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

General

Alderley Edge Parish Council has raised a number of concerns relating to drainage and flooding. In response to these concerns it should be noted that the applicant (Cheshire East Council) has satisfied the relevant statutory consultees in respect of the above and that the drainage scheme as a whole has been designed with, and met the approval of the Environment Agency. With reference to Aldford Place and Wilton Crescent, a land drain will be provided by the applicant as part of bypass construction phase where future maintenance responsibilities will rest with the land owner, which in this case is Cheshire East Council (as edged in blue on plan PC/10096/02/45 'Planning Application and Land Boundaries').

Re-profiling agricultural fields in vicinity of Wilton crescent

The current application proposes to improve an area of agricultural land adjacent to the bypass identified as areas 6 and 7 on plan PC/10096/02/43. The reasoning behind the re-profiling of these fields is to allow excess material generated in the construction of the bypass to be retained on site whilst enhancing the agricultural viability of the land. The proposal involves the grading of the land to the east of the road between the top of the 3 metre high mounding (above road level) towards the garden boundaries to the rear of Wilton Crescent. To the east of the road, grading would occur from the top of the 1 metre high mounding and gradually feathered out into existing ground levels. The operations are referred to in the supporting statement which accompanies the application and will involve the following: stripping and stockpiling the topsoil; completing the fill to proposed levels; re-applying the

topsoil; seeding in accordance with the landscaping scheme in order to return the area to pasture.

Alderley Edge Parish Council has commented that the current limitations on the hours of operation of the original permission in the proximity of Wilton Crescent are insufficient. The original permission (5/03/1846P) limits hours of operation (construction, engineering and earth moving operations) to 0730 – 1800 Monday to Friday and 0800-1300 Saturday with no activity on Sundays or Bank or Public Holidays. The Parish Council considers that work should not be permitted at weekends under any circumstances, and restricted to 0800 – 1700 on weekdays.

Although it is acknowledged that the construction works would have an impact on the amenity of adjacent properties on Wilton Crescent it is considered that regularised working hours in line with those of the approved scheme should prevail. It should however be noted that there is a contractual obligation for the contractor to work within maximum permitted noise levels and maximum vibration levels which are provided in Appendix 2 of the application entitled 'Control of Noise and Vibration'.

The re-profiling of the two fields adjacent to the bypass will reduce the visual impact of mitigation mounding in this area by blending the tops of the mounding with the surrounding land. The raising of contour levels here would provide a more even field surface when compared to the approved scheme and would allow the land to be returned to agriculture whilst improving field drainage. It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable.

Realigned Cycleway to connect to Bypass at Brook Lane

The current application proposes to realign the section of cycleway which provides a connection to the bypass at Brook Lane. A letter of objection has been received in relation to this aspect of the proposed development. Particular concern relates to the realigned section of cycleway siting at a higher level than the original proposed location and its associated impacts. The applicant has stated that the reasoning behind the realignment is due to the existence of a mature tree which was identified as being retained under the original permission. However, it has since been discovered that it is no longer possible to construct the cycleway whilst retaining the tree and as such the route has been amended. The issues raised in relation to this element of the current application are the impact of the relocated cycleway on visual intrusion, noise, loss of privacy, loss of quiet enjoyment (to properties in vicinity along Brook Lane).

The principle of a cycleway link to the bypass in this area was accepted as part of the original scheme however the alignment has now changed. Site constraints in this area generally dictate the siting and it is accepted that initially the cycleway will have some degree of visual impact. The proposed mitigation package in this area however will provide an appropriate level of

screening in the form of landscaping and screen planting. A number of properties to the south of Brook Lane benefit from an existing level of screening due to the presence of well established trees to the rear and side of the properties which would provide an immediate degree of screening from some aspects of the development. There is however a gap in the existing vegetation to the side of the property known as Chesham Knoll which will mean that mitigation will be reliant of the landscaping scheme in relation to views towards the cycleway from this property and the adjacent property also. This would also have been the case for the approved route; however it is acknowledged that the proposed location is in a more elevated position. The revised landscaping proposals will provide an acceptable level of screening/mitigation to compensate, although the benefits of such will only be fully realised once the planting scheme becomes established.

Ecology

The fundamental ecological issues associated with the A34 Alderley Edge and Nether Alderley Bypass were assessed in the original application (5/03/1846P). All the areas in the current application are within the site boundary and survey areas of the original application, and have therefore been addressed accordingly in respect of ecological issues and protected species. As such, mitigation measures have been implemented on site for example amphibian fencing, and others are well under way. However, as these surveys identified the presence of a European Protected Species (Great Crested Newt) within the study area it is necessary that they are considered in the context of the current application also. Relevant to this consideration is the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations and the three tests contained within them.

The original scheme permitted under planning permission (5/03/1846P) satisfied the three tests in relation to: (i) *preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economical nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment* (ii) *no satisfactory alternative* and (iii) *will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range*. The current application relates mainly to amendments and additions to the original scheme which are unlikely to further adversely impact upon protected species given that they fall with the application site of the original scheme and mitigation measures were put in place once construction commenced earlier this year. Ecological surveys associated with the bypass have also been updated throughout the last three years, which includes the areas contained within the current application.

In considering the three tests for the current application, the proposals relate to amendments to the original scheme which currently benefits from a Natural England licence in relation to European Protected Species. Given the direct relationship of the proposals to the bypass scheme as a whole and the reasoning behind them; for example, detailed drainage design in respect of

Environment Agency standards and recommendations from the 2005 Public Inquiry for increased mitigation; it is considered that the purpose of the proposed development remains in the overriding public interest. Elements of the proposed development, for example the pumping stations, detention basins and raised carriageway levels, are imperative to the functioning of the bypass in terms of drainage and flooding. Detailed drainage design has been carried out in consultation with the Environment Agency who is satisfied with the scheme and has raised no objections to this application. Other aspects of the proposed development include changes to the approved landscaping scheme to incorporate additional/raised mounding and screen planting to further mitigate against the adverse effects of the bypass, both as a result of changes to the road levels and also to respond to recommendations from the Public Inquiry. The alternative to the proposed amendments contained in this application would be to continue with the 2003 scheme (5/03/1846P) as approved without the amendments; however it is not considered that this would be a satisfactory alternative given the reasoning behind the proposals.

In terms of the conservation status of protected species, the issues addressed as part of the original scheme are relevant to this application in respect of survey area, mitigation and management. This includes major landscape improvement and nature conservation enhancement, with particular reference to habitat creation for Great Crested Newts. The current application proposes to relocate two conservation ponds from area 18 (previously approved) to area 15, in order to provide a more natural, low-lying habitat. The planting mix surrounding the two ponds is also reflective of the intention to provide a natural habitat as possible to encourage wildlife and to enhance its ecological potential. Given the ecological benefits of locating the conservation ponds in area 15; in addition to other issues such as the opportunity to provide better mitigation in area 18 for surrounding properties; the proposal is considered to be acceptable.

The Council's ecologist has not objected to the current proposals but has advised that conditions are required to ensure appropriate management of the scheme and to protect breeding birds. A landscape and ecological management plan has been approved as part of the original application, however given the proposed changes, a revised ecological management plan could be conditioned in relation to the amended elements. Although it is anticipated that most tree felling / hedgerow removal has already been carried out as the approved scheme is well underway, a condition to protect breeding birds could be attached to any permission as a precautionary measure.

In terms of ecological issues, it is considered that the current proposals do not give rise to any significant additional impacts to those identified in the approved bypass application and updated ecological surveys have not indicated that additional measures need to be undertaken. The proposals are directly linked to planning permission 5/03/1846P which provides an appropriate level of mitigation and management in relation to protected species and is therefore considered to be in compliance with policy NE11 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

Forestry

Arboricultural issues associated with the current application do not differ significantly from those assessed in the original application (5/03/1846P). Those trees initially identified for removal have been removed from site as construction works are well underway. The remaining trees for retention are subject to appropriate protection for the duration of construction works, the method of which was approved under a condition of the original permission. However, the current proposals necessitate the removal of two additional trees which have already been felled. These trees are located to the Northern end of the bypass in close proximity to Harden Park roundabout. Due to the loss, the Tree Officer has requested that additional landscaping should be provided in the immediate area in order to compensate for the loss of these two trees. The area immediately adjacent does however comprise of planting compartment CE1 which was approved as part of the landscaping scheme under the original permission (5/03/1846P). It is considered that this area has sufficient landscaping provision as a result of the approved landscaping scheme and as such further compensatory landscaping is not necessary for the loss of the two trees.

Although tree protection has been secured under the original permission this could also be conditioned as part of the current application as a precautionary measure in line with policy DC9 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

Structures

Pedestrian Footbridge (Footpath 33 Nether Alderley)

A pedestrian footbridge is proposed in the vicinity of the Heawood Hall complex/area 16 to maintain a direct route for Footpath 33 (Nether Alderley). The bridge proposed is an open single span steel structure (green in colour) with concrete bank seats at each end which will be founded on the mitigation mounding so that earth ramps can be constructed down the sides of the mounds. The original application allows for this footpath to cross the bypass at grade, however following on from the 2005 Public Inquiry the Inspector concluded that it was desirable in the interests of good practice to save this footpath by providing a pedestrian footbridge. The provision of a footbridge over the road would also provide a safer route as opposed to waiting for gaps in the traffic and would enhance localised pedestrian linkages which have been severed by the bypass.

Nether Alderley Parish Council has commented that the footbridge is extremely obtrusive to adjacent properties in the Green Belt, and also questions the need for both a ramp and steps. The type of footbridge been chosen to be as less visually intrusive as possible in the rural setting. The design of the bridge is relatively open and will coloured green so as to blend in more with its surroundings. Although the structure will have some impact on the visual amenity of the Green Belt and nearby residences, this is not

considered to be significant and will lessen over time as the landscaping scheme becomes more established. The bypass scheme has already been accepted in the Green Belt and it is considered that the benefits of the footbridge outweigh any additional harm to the Green Belt. The provision of both a ramp and steps is part of the accessible design and the ramps will be constructed within the mounding.

Under-bridge Parapets

The applicant has confirmed that the colour of the parapets will be green in colour to match other structures within the scheme and to blend in with surroundings more appropriately. The change in colour of the parapets from an aluminium colour to green is a welcomed amendment.

Amendments to approved bridges

The proposed changes to the bridges are considered to be acceptable in terms of materials and design.

EIA Development

During the consultation process it was raised that the application is EIA development and therefore should be accompanied by an Environmental Statement. Prior to submission of the application the Planning Authority carried out a screening opinion and determined that the amendments to the scheme were not significant to warrant an Environmental Statement or an addendum to the original Environmental Statement which accompanied the approved application (5/03/1846P).

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The current application proposes amendments to the original approved scheme which have arisen from the detailed design process and recommendations from the 2005 Public Inquiry since the grant of permission in 2003. The most significant change to the scheme is the revised vertical alignment of the road in various sections along the route where mitigation levels have either been maintained or enhanced. Issues raised in representations have been addressed in the report and relevant issues have been considered. The principle of the bypass has been accepted and it is regarded that the proposals contained in this application are fundamental to the delivery of the scheme. The recommendation to the Strategic Planning Board is to approve the proposed development, subject to appropriate conditions (these will be provided in an update report).

