

Application No: 14/0043C

Location: NORTHBOUND SLIP ROAD, JUNCTION 17 OF THE M6, AND OLD MILL ROAD, SANDBACH, CW11 4SP

Proposal: Improvement of J17 Northbound slip road. Provision of new roundabout to provide access to development site, Old Mill Road and slip road

Applicant: W and S Sandbach Ltd

Expiry Date: 20-Mar-2014

Date report prepared: 21 March 2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Highway Safety and Traffic Generation.
- Impact on nature conservation interests
- Air Quality
- Noise Impact
- Landscape Impact
- Hedge and Tree Matters
- Amenity

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been referred to Strategic Planning Committee because it is a major development.

The application is also closely linked to application 12/3948C, which appears elsewhere on the agenda.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises the existing road junction where the northbound slip roads at J17 of the M6 meet Old Mill Road, and a small section of the adjacent farmland. The site is located within Open Countryside as identified in the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission to create a new roundabout to improve the northbound slip road and create an access into the adjacent development site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

POLICIES

Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005

PS8 (Open countryside)
GR1 (New Development)
GR2 (Design)
GR3 (Residential Development)
GR4 (Landscaping)
GR5 (Landscaping)
GR6 (Amenity and Health)
GR7 (Amenity and Health)
GR8 (Amenity and Health - pollution impact)
GR9 (Accessibility, servicing and provision of parking)
GR10 (Accessibility for proposals with significant travel needs)
GR11 (Development involving new roads and other transportation projects)
GR14 (Cycling Measures)
GR15 (Pedestrian Measures)
GR17 (Car parking)
GR18 (Traffic Generation)
GR19 (Infrastructure provision)
GR20 (Utilities infrastructure provision)
GR21 (Flood Prevention)
NR1 (Trees and Woodland)
NR3 (Habitats)
NR5 (Creation of habitats)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)
Sandbach Business Park Development Brief (1989)
Relevant legislation also includes the EC Habitats Directive and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994
Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version in the decision-making process.

At its meeting on the 28th March 2014, the Council resolved to approve the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* for publication and submission to the Secretary of State. It was also resolved that this document be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

Relevant policies of this document are:

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
 PG1 Overall Development Strategy
 PG2 Settlement hierarchy
 PG6 Spatial Distribution of Development
 SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
 SD2 Sustainable Development Principles
 IN1 Infrastructure
 IN2 Developer contributions
 SC3 Health and Well-being
 SE1 Design
 SE2 Efficient use of land
 SE3 Biodiversity and geodiversity
 SE4 The Landscape
 SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
 SE6 Green Infrastructure
 SE12 Pollution, Land contamination and land instability
 SE13 Flood risk and water management
 CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport
 CO2 Enabling business growth through transport infrastructure
 CO4 Travel plans and transport assessments

Strategic Site CS24 – land adjacent to J17 of M6, south east of Congleton Road, Sandbach

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways Agency – No objections subject to conditions requiring full design and construction details to be submitted

United Utilities – No objections

Environment Agency – No objections subject to conditions relating to surface water run off and managing the risk of flooding

Sustrans – If approved would like to see a safe crossing of Old Mill Road for pedestrian and cycle routes, and at the new roundabout junction of M6

Jodrell Bank – No comments to make

Public Rights of Way – It appears unlikely that the proposal would affect the public right of way

Environmental Health – No objections subject to conditions

Strategic Highways Manager – No objections

VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Sandbach Town Council – No objection

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

24 letters of representation have been received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- The impact of the development proposal on traffic cannot be accepted as not severe
- data from the traffic survey is unrepresentative of current traffic demand local to junction 17, being significantly lower than equivalent surveys supporting other local developments.
- It is unclear whether the design of the roundabout at the M6 J17 northbound slips has taken due account of sightlines required for those seeking to exit the M6.
- Appalling design from highway engineering point of view
- Roundabout will not handle level of traffic
- Access to employment site should come off separate roundabout to west of petrol station
- Proposal will make junction even more dangerous
- Application does nothing to improve safety for south bound slip road
- Congestion along Old Mill Road understated
- Only benefit of this is access to a development site
- A bicycle is 14 times more likely to be hit at a roundabout than a car is. The proposed northbound 'slip road' additionally allows for high speed and adds to this danger.
- Signalised crossings for pedestrians and cyclists are required
- Covered cycle parking at the small car sharers' car park opposite the Texaco petrol station to encourage cycling to this destination.
- Landscaping required
- Many motorists are using the junction at the chimney house hotel (Congleton rd/church lane) to do a U TURN literally in the middle of the road. For 1 minute at 08.35 I saw 5 cars doing this.
- If government money is being used for the junction then the layout must help drivers on their journey not a building company make the access easier for a building project
- Why is application not made by Highways Agency or Cheshire East
- Destroys rural approach to Sandbach
- Impact upon existing field access to northern side of Old Mill Road

In addition, 1 letter of support has been received.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The applicant has submitted the following documents with the application: air quality assessment; noise assessment; flood risk assessment; and a transport assessment.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Design / character

The site is designated within the Open Countryside as identified in the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005. Policy PS8 of the local plan identifies that facilities for outdoor sport, recreation and tourism, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the countryside and maintain or enhance its character are acceptable.

The proposals involve engineering operations to create a roundabout, and as such will preserve the openness of the countryside. The proposal will replace the existing crossroads at this junction and whilst the proposals will widen the overall footprint of the roadway, the overall visual impact is not considered to be significantly adverse having regard to the existing conditions. Landscaping will help to mitigate some of the engineering impact of the road improvements. It is considered that the development should set the concept for a tree lined entrance and spine through the Capricorn site and landscape enhancement on the embankment of the slip road and therefore a landscape condition should be attached securing this and other landscape design proposals. Subject to this condition, the application is therefore considered to comply with policies PS8, GR1 and GR2 of the local plan.

Trees

There are existing trees and lengths of hedge on the site of the proposed development. The submission is not supported by any arboricultural or hedgerow information and it is not clear from the submission what extent of tree and hedge loss would be involved. However, the trees are not formally protected on this site and the trees concerned do not appear to be of significant merit, although they are readily visible from Old Mill Road. Replacement planting could be secured by condition.

The need for the proposal in terms of the highways benefits it will bring is also considered to outweigh any tree and hedgerow losses.

Ecology

The nature conservation officer has commented on the application and does not anticipate any significant ecological impacts. However, as noted above there will be the loss of some hedgerows. Hedgerows are a Biodiversity Action plan priority habitat and a material consideration. It is therefore recommended that appropriate native hedgerow planting should be carried out to compensate for that lost. A condition to safeguard breeding birds is also recommended.

Highways

The Strategic Highways Manager has provided the following comments on the proposal:

The proposed roundabout is a larger scheme on the western side of the M6 that encompasses the Highway Agency pinch point improvement scheme at J17 M6. The roundabout will have a dedicated left turn lane to the northbound M6 and provide two lanes for eastbound traffic. A new access arm into the proposed Business Park is provided on the south of the roundabout. The traffic signals proposed at the southbound slips is unaffected by the roundabout works.

To assess the implications of adding a further development arm into the roundabout, a number of scenarios were run using the recent traffic model for the A534 corridor:

- i) Base + Committed Development + Pinch Point Scheme (PPS) (Do Minimum)
- i) Base + Committed Development + PPS + Capricorn + Revised Rbt Design (Do Something)

The Vissim model can be used to assess the impact of the scheme by comparing journey times along the corridor and also the predicted queue lengths. A comparison of the travel times indicate that the inclusion of the larger roundabout does improve travel reliability over the original pinch point scheme (which in itself is an improvement over the existing situation). However, there is a negative affect of the new roundabout, this relates to some increased delay on the right turn on the M6 southbound off slip (but still much better than the existing situation). This is a matter for the HA to consider in their comments. The predicted queue lengths are relatively comparable in both the 'Do Minimum' and 'Do Something' scenarios. Therefore, overall there are definite benefits in providing a much larger roundabout instead of the smaller scheme in the HA pinch point scheme, this is despite the inclusion of a further new arm at the junction and the Capricorn development.

A stage 1 road safety audit has been undertaken on the submitted design, which did not raise any fundamental safety concerns

There is a footpath provided on the southern side of Old Mill Road, this route would allow crossing of the M6 bridge for pedestrians on the southern side. It has not been possible to include signalised cycle/footway crossings due the detrimental effect they would have on the operation of the roundabout and also the nearby signal junction. The Strategic Highways Manager therefore raises no highway objections to the application.

The Highways Agency also raise no objections to the proposal subject to a condition requiring the submission of full design and construction details to be submitted and agreed with them.

With regard to the comments received in representation regarding the impact upon existing field access to northern side of Old Mill Road, it is understood that the applicants have an option agreement with the landowner for the acquisition of the land in question. The applicants have confirmed that they are working together with the landowner towards providing a satisfactory solution to the issue of land access.

Flood Risk

The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) submitted in support of the planning application is that prepared for the proposed mixed use development to the south (planning reference 12/3948C), which the access will serve.

The submitted FRA does not specifically encompass the road improvements proposed as part of the application; however, the flood risk issues remain the same.

In order to ensure that surface water drainage is appropriately addressed, the Environment Agency recommend conditions relating to surface water run off and managing the risk of flooding.

Air Quality

Junction 17 of the M6, Sandbach is designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) as concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) exceed European, health based limit values. The study area of the submitted Air Quality Impact Assessment encompasses the AQMA.

Dust emissions which would be expected during construction are proposed to be mitigated by a number of measures such as water suppression and cleaning. These measures would be contained within an Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

During the operational phase of the M6 northbound improvements in conjunction with planning application 12/3948C, the report confirms that there is likely to be increased exposure to airborne pollution at all receptors modelled.

Four of these receptors are within the AQMA. Environmental Health advises that that any increase of concentrations in an AQMA is considered significant as it is directly converse to their local air quality management objectives. Mitigation has therefore been recommended as part of planning application 12/3948C to help safeguard residential amenity, public health and manage the cumulative impacts of development in the area.

It is noted that there is a separate scheme proposed by the Highways Agency, undertaking further improvements to J17. The HA have demonstrated that their scheme will prove beneficial to the AQMA.

On balance, Environmental Health raises no objection to this application subject to the mitigation proposed in the linked application 12/3948C being implemented.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed roundabout will operationally provide an improved junction at J17 of the M6 and Old Mill Road, and will also serve the adjacent development site. No significant adverse impacts are identified. Accordingly a recommendation of approval is made.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
4. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
5. Design and construction details to be submitted
6. Scheme to limit the surface water runoff to be submitted
7. Scheme to manage the risk of flooding from overland flow of surface water to be submitted
8. Environmental Management Plan to be submitted
9. Breeding birds survey to be submitted

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