

**Himley Village, NW Bicester – LPA
Ref: 14/02121/OUT**

**Technical Note Response to OCC
E Mail of 15th Dec 2016**

**Prepared for P3Eco
December 2016**

Himley Village

Response to OCC E Mail dated 15th December 2016

1.0 Introduction

A Transport Assessment Addendum was submitted to OCC in mid-October 2016 the focus of which was proposals for an interim improvement to the Bucknell Road/Howes Lane and Bucknell Road/Lords Lane junctions.

OCC have subsequently reviewed this and set out their response in a report dated 8th November 2016. ABA responded to this in a report dated the 25th November 2016.

OCC have responded to the report of the 25th November in an e mail of the 1st December 2016. ABA have responded to this e mail with a Technical Note of 2nd December.

Subsequent to the Technical Note of the 2nd December a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken by Project Centre (PCL) for the existing junction. PCL have also been commissioned to undertake an independent assessment of the information produced by both parties and within the context of their Stage 3 RSA and therefore knowledge of issues at the junction, come to a view as to the relative road safety merits of the existing layout and proposed interim layout. Reports by PCL are also attached.

OCC have provided further comments in an attachment to an e mail of the 15th December. This technical note of 21st December is a response to that e mail.

2.0 Executive Summary

We do not accept that the proposed interim junction layout will have a negative impact on road safety. The existing junctions have some significant safety issues for all road users and the level of road safety risk will go up as traffic flows increase. Through our own design process and through the dialogue with OCC we have considered all the safety aspects of the interim layout and concluded that it will reduce the level of road safety risk compared to the existing layout that will be subject to increased traffic flows. PCL have undertaken a Stage 1 RSA of the scheme, a Stage 3 RSA of the existing layout and a technical review of the issues and responses presented by ABA and OCC. They concur with our view that road safety will be improved under the interim junction.

We accept that there are further amendments and refinements to the design that are non-material in nature. This, however, is not unusual at this stage within a normal planning application process. All outstanding OCC issues will be addressed in a further design iteration to be undertaken within the formal Section 278 agreement process, secured through the Section 106 Agreement.

It is our assessment and that of PCL that the proposed crossing under the bridge is safer than the existing crossing. Notwithstanding this position, pedestrian numbers using this crossing are extremely low and it may be feasible to include an 'on demand' phase on the basis that this will not have a significant impact on traffic capacity.

Going forward, the changed junction layout and method of control in the vicinity of the rail overbridge does need to be addressed with Network Rail. However, our initial assessment is that the interim junction will actually reduce the risk to the bridge structure. A formal risk

assessment would need to be prepared and submitted through the standard BAPA process which can be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

Finally, we would highlight once again the substantial capacity improvement that the interim scheme will create and the consequent benefits this brings in terms of delivering homes and jobs. The current likely development scenario of 900 homes north of the railway with no improvement to the current layout will result in very significant congestion. This in itself will result in road safety issues as a result of driver impatience leading to higher levels of risk taking than would otherwise occur. Allowing this situation to develop without intervention would also seem to contradict the objectives that OCC themselves have set in their Local Transport Plan – namely supporting jobs and housing growth, making most effective use of available transport capacity, increasing journey time reliability, reducing emissions, making walking and cycling more attractive and improving public health and wellbeing.

2.0 Junction Layout Issues

Pedestrian and Cycle Facilities

PCL as part of their work have undertaken a 'snap shot' survey at the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road junction on 15th December between 7:40 and 8:40am. From this, two pedestrians and three cyclists were observed using the footway on the south east side of Howes Lane. More detail on all the movements recorded are given in PCL's Technical Assessment report.

Whilst the survey was for an hour in the AM peak period only, it gives a very strong indication that as expected the number of pedestrians and cyclists using the junction are extremely low. Therefore, the probability of two users actually meeting at the pinch point is extremely low and consequently the safety risk is negligible.

OCC have stated that a minimum footway width of 1.0m at pinch points is acceptable. At the area of the pinch point on Howes Lane there is sufficient space to be able to provide a 1.0m footway whilst providing space for HGV tracking, appropriate lane lengths and a footway on the north west side. This will be demonstrated in the next iteration of the design which will be undertaken within the formal Section 278 agreement process.

In previous reports/technical notes we have set our view that the interim junction layout will improve the environment for cyclists. In a meeting in early November we discussed the potential for providing Advanced Stop Lines on all arms of the junction but OCC stated that they did not require this. We would be happy to consider use of ASL's although this should be balanced against the expected frequency of use by cyclists.

During the 'snap shot' survey five cyclists were observed on Howes Lane. Three of these were illegally using the footway and two were therefore on the carriageway. It is possible that cyclists are using the footway as the experience of using the carriageway on Howes Lane is uncomfortable. The same cyclists may also be avoiding the junction as this again is uncomfortable for them. It may be therefore that creating a more comfortable environment at the junction may encourage more cyclists to use the carriageway of Howes Lane, although this remains to be seen.

We do not agree with OCC's comment regarding cyclists wanting to turn right out of Howes Lane. The width of the lanes on Howes Lane (3.1-3.2m) is such that experienced and confident cyclists (who are more likely to be on the carriageway than footway) will position themselves so that they are close to the middle of the lane with vehicles following behind them. It will therefore be relatively easy for them to move across to the right hand lane on the approach to the signals.

In queuing traffic, cyclists will generally be able to move up the inside and outside of vehicles in order to get to the signals. This is a common occurrence particularly in urban areas.

In relation to the potential for an additional footway on the north west side of Bucknell Road, a provision of around 2.0m width is feasible while still extending the length of the right turning lane to 50m. This will be demonstrated in the next iteration of the design which will be undertaken within the formal Section 278 agreement process.

Crossing Point on Bucknell Road between Howes Lane and Lords Lane

The proposed crossing of Bucknell Road would improve visibility of and for pedestrians compared to the existing situation. For pedestrians travelling west to east at the point of the crossing the visibility north westwards up the realigned Bucknell Road is at least 50m. This would enable pedestrians to see south east bound vehicles either coming from Bucknell Road or turning left from Lords Lane.

Currently the proposal for this crossing is 'walk with traffic'. The results of the 'snap shot' survey indicate that the number of pedestrians using this crossing is extremely low and it is therefore likely that an 'on demand' stage could be included that would be called a maximum of once every 15 minutes (once every 7.5 cycles). This is unlikely to significantly affect vehicle capacity. This will be demonstrated in the next iteration of the design which will be undertaken within the formal Section 278 agreement process.

We do not agree that the use of signals will make vehicle movements less predictable and that pedestrians will not be able to make sense of the various signal phases. Using 'with traffic' crossing facilities is not uncommon and given that the vast majority of pedestrians will be regular users of the junction they will become familiar with signal stages and the gaps this creates in the flow of traffic. Crossing Howes Lane at this location will be safer compared to the situation of the existing layout being unchanged with traffic flows increasing through the junction.

Overall Conditions for Pedestrians

The introduction of signals with the associated refuge would improve safety for pedestrians crossing Howes Lane. Under the current layout there is no refuge on Howes Lane and pedestrians have to cross three lanes of traffic, a distance of 9m.

The proposed refuge is 1.5m in width and is not narrow – it is in accordance with current design standards. We would question the frequency with which pedestrians with bikes or prams would actually use this crossing point. However, the low frequency of use is such that those with bikes or prams if they were longer than 2m would be able to position themselves within the refuge so that there was no overhanging.

As has previously been set out an additional footway can be provided on the north west side of Howes Lane and the concern regarding the crossing of Bucknell Road could potentially be addressed through the use of an 'on demand' pedestrians stage. On the basis that these can be demonstrated to be feasible and considered together with the other improvements inherent within the interim junction layout, we trust that OCC will accept that the scheme would provide an improvement in safety for pedestrians.

Whilst the issue of a common law duty of care is subject to different legal opinion it is clear that through the goals and strategy set out in the LTP that OCC has a responsibility to address the

situation that it now can foresee will occur at the junction. Those objectives that are relevant include:

- Make most effective use of all available transport capacity through innovative management of the network;
- Increase journey time reliability and minimise end-to-end public transport journey times on main routes;
- Reduce emissions, enhance air quality and support the transition to a low carbon economy
- Reduce the proportion of journeys made by private car by making the use of public transport, walking and cycling more attractive;
- Improve public health and wellbeing by increasing levels of walking and cycling, reducing transport emissions, reducing casualties, and enabling inclusive access to jobs, education, training and services.

We also note that one of the higher level objectives is to 'support jobs and housing growth' which is extremely relevant to Himley Village and NW Bicester more broadly.

We strongly reject OCC's apparent view that the design is deficient. The independent assessment by PCL has demonstrated that this is not the case and on the contrary would reduce road safety risk compared to the junction remaining as it is currently and also being subject to increased traffic flows.

Whilst there are few reported injury accidents at the junction we are extremely surprised that OCC believe the current layout 'operates very safely'. The Stage 3 RSA of the existing layout by PCL has highlighted a number of issues including the tracking of large vehicles, the speed with which vehicles move through the junction and the difficulties of using the junction as a pedestrian. It is plainly not the case that the layout currently operates very safely and there is every reason to expect that without intervention the level of risk for all road users will increase due to the expected rise in traffic using the junction.

Signal Equipment and Traffic Signs

Clarity is needed from OCC as to where they believe that footway widths could not be increased to accommodate signal equipment and traffic signs.

Vehicle Tracking Issues

OCC state that the need for the largest HGVs to pass one another will be a common occurrence. Given the situation with the low usage of the right turn lane from Howes Lane to Bucknell Road we would maintain our assessment that any potential for conflict between vehicles in the two adjacent north east bound lanes on Howes Lane or the south west bound and north east bound (right turn) lanes will be a rare occurrence. We would repeat our comments in previous reports/technical notes that there is still scope and space within the limits of the public highway to further refine the design to address these issues and also that the interim junction will be an improvement on the existing layout.

We are extremely surprised that OCC would be happy for the current situation of uncontrolled movements with drivers negotiating road space between themselves to continue given the expected rise in traffic using the junction. The probability of vehicles coming into conflict with one another will go up leading to an increased level of road safety risk. The interim junction

layout addresses this issue in that it creates space for HGVs to move through the junction without conflict with opposing movements.

We accept that there will be occasions when HGVs are turning right from Howes Lane to Bucknell Road but the frequency of this will be low given the 7.5 tonne weight limit to the south. Therefore, the risk of conflict with vehicles in the adjacent left turning lane will also be low. It should be noted that with the current arrangement there would certainly be conflict between the largest HGVs that are approaching Bucknell Road in adjacent lanes. The interim junction widens the carriageway at this location enabling more generous lanes to be provided. This reduces this risk of conflict with benefits for both road safety and traffic capacity.

The use of vehicle containment kerbs at junctions is not uncommon. We can provide examples of recent junction improvements where they have been used even when the layout is relatively generous in terms of space. We do not agree that the proposed containment kerbs will deflect vehicles into adjacent lanes. HGVs will be moving through the junction at around 5mph and at this speed with their weight (20-35 tonnes typically), they will not be any deflection.

We accept that a vehicle of 2.9m width or with an overhang of up to 305mm is unlikely to be able to negotiate the interim junction layout although this size of vehicle may also have difficulty with the existing layout. However, our understanding is that a transport operator with this type of vehicle is required to notify the Police two days in advance and they would be able to advise as to an appropriate route to take. We would note that new junction layouts are not determined by anything other than the maximum legal length and width for normal HGVs. We would also note that for north south movement there is an alternative route around the east side of Bicester.

We would strongly disagree that pedestrian footfall at the junction will increase at the junction at least in the short to medium term. The centre of Himley Village is a minimum of 1.5km away (direct distance) and the centre of the Exemplar site at least 1.25km from the junction. These developments will not generate anything other than a few pedestrians using the junction due to the distance involved and the poor experience of walking along Howes Lane and Lords Lane. In any event the interim junction improves pedestrian safety compared to the junction remaining as it is currently and being subject to increased traffic flows.

Increased Proximity of Carriageway to Railway Bridge

We repeat our assessment given in previous reports/technical notes that the interim junction will reduce the risk to the Network Rail bridge assets compared to the existing situation. In particular, the use of containment kerbs on the north west side of Bucknell Road will be a significant improvement compared to the existing situation where only standard kerbs are used.

We would be interested to receive further details of the recent bridge strike that OCC refer to.

We would at the appropriate time via the standard BAPA process enter into discussions with Network Rail on the change to the junction layout.

Lane Lengths

There is sufficient space within the public highway for a 50m length right turning lane. This will be demonstrated in the next iteration of the design which will be undertaken within the formal Section 278 agreement process.

As stated previously the demand for right turning vehicles from Lords Lane to Bucknell Road is only 10 vehicles in the peak hour. This is equivalent to one vehicle every three cycles. Given

that this phase is called every cycle it is plainly obvious that no queuing will occur in this lane beyond each cycle. On average for two out of every three cycles of the signals there will be no vehicles at all in the right turning lane.

During the next iteration of the design the LINSIG modelling will need to be updated. However, OCC have already acknowledged that the changes made to the layout compared to the previous iteration will not have any significant impact on capacity.

Impact on Properties in Howes Lane

The impact of the interim junction scheme on air quality, noise and vibration has already been assessed and is contained in an addendum to the Environmental Statement submitted in mid-October 2016. This assessment considers a scenario of the interim junction scheme with development at Himley Village, the Exemplar, Application 1 and the Albion Land. As far as we are aware an equivalent assessment for the current likely scenario of development at the Exemplar, Application 1 and the Albion Land with no improvement to the existing junction has not been undertaken.

We note the reference by OCC to a more detailed air quality assessment. The assessment already undertaken covers a number of receptors including Goldsmith Close which is the closest residential street to the junction. We would suggest that OCC review this work and advise whether or not this meets their requirement for detailed modelling. If it does not meet their requirements then any further assessment must consider the current likely development scenario (as referenced above) and the alternative with Himley Village and the interim junction improvement so that a like for like comparison can be made.

The need for the developer to indemnify OCC against any claims through the land compensation act is noted.

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Reviewed by [Click here to enter text.](#)
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