OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

District: Cherwell
Application no: 14/02121/OUT-3
Proposal: OUTLINE - Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1 and C1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)
Location: Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester Middleton Stoney Road Bicester Oxfordshire

Purpose of document

This report sets out Oxfordshire County Council's view on the proposal.

This report contains officer advice in the form of a strategic localities response and technical team response(s). Where local member have responded these have been attached by OCCs Major Planning Applications Team (planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

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Strategic Comments

This consultation response updates OCC's response of 08 November 2016 which addresses the proposal for interim junction works and bringing forward the Himley development ahead of the tunnel and realigned road. All points raised in OCCs previous consultation responses dated 08 November 2016, 16 October 2015 and 20th May 2015 still apply, other than those addressed in the individual team responses within this document.

Additional information was received from the applicant on 21 December 2016 which sought to overcome concerns previously raised by OCC regarding the proposed mitigation scheme of traffic signalisation at the junction. In response to this information:

- OCC maintains its objection to the proposed interim scheme because the submission does not demonstrate that previously identified problems can be remedied. Space at the junction is so constrained that it would not pass a technical and safety audit and as a result the interim scheme is not feasible. Full details are set out in the Transport response below.

- With regard to road network capacity, advice from OCC's consultants is that the latest changes to the proposals would not have a significant impact on the capacity.

- OCC maintains the transport objection to the developer's proposal to bring forward the entire development ahead of delivery of the strategic road link (Howes Lane Realignment) and tunnels under the railway because this would result in a severe traffic impact at the Howes Lane/Bucknell Road/Lords Lane junction.

OCC also wish to reiterate that it is critical that the tunnel and realigned road scheme are delivered and that the applicants are required to commit to paying their share of this strategic infrastructure.

OCC recommend that no development should take place before the road and tunnel are in place. However, if members of CDC's planning committee are minded to grant planning permission this should be subject to agreed phasing that is linked to the delivery of the road and tunnel.

Officer's Name: Lisa Michelson
Officer's Title: Locality Manager
Date: 09 January 2017

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Transport

Key Issues

Firstly this response addresses additional information received from the applicant on 21 December 2016 which sought to overcome concerns previously raised by OCC regarding the proposed mitigation scheme of traffic signalisation at the junction. This concludes that the interim scheme is not feasible and dismisses the assertion that the proposed scheme is required to address safety issues with the existing arrangements.

Secondly, an update is provided to advise that the latest changes to the interim junction proposals would not have a significant impact on the capacity.

1) OCC response to Himley Village submission of 21 December 2016

I have reviewed the two documents received from Alan Baxters on 21 December in conjunction with colleagues:

- Technical Note Response to OCC E Mail of 15th Dec 2016 (Alan Baxter for P3 Eco)
- Howes Lane/Bucknell Road/Lords Lane Technical Review Ref: 1000003465/TN/NB/01 (Project Centre Ltd for Alan Baxter)

The submission seeks to overcome concerns previously raised by OCC regarding the proposed mitigation scheme of traffic signalisation at the junction, whilst also highlighting the safety benefits of the scheme in comparision with the current situation. The PCL document includes a Stage 3 safety audit of the current arrangements.

The current arrangements were put in place as mitigation for the traffic impact of the NW Bicester Exemplar site, and a Stage 3 safety audit has already been carried out by TMS on the scheme. This earlier safety audit is referred to in my response.

OCC maintains its objection to the proposed interim scheme because the submission does not demonstrate that previously identified problems can be remedied. Rather it states that these issues can be addressed at S278 application stage. The professional opinion of OCC engineers is that space at the junction is so constrained that it will not be possible to address the concerns and produce a design that will satisfy technical and safety audit, and that, as a result the scheme is not feasible. A full critique of the issues raised in the Technical Note is set out in Table 1 below.

OCC also continues to disagree that the proposed scheme is required to address safety issues with the existing arrangements. Table 2 below is a critique of the Stage 3 safety audit carried out by PCL, which identified a number of factors that were not considered to be problems in the original TMS safety audit. OCC does not agree that these are issues needing to be addressed, but as set out in Table 2, if it did, then they could be addressed through simpler, less costly measures.

It remains OCC's view that the junction as it is, works reasonably well and has a good accident record. This means that the additional risk posed by increasing traffic volumes is considered to be low.

Table 1: OCC comments on Alan Baxter/PCL comments raised in response to OCC comments of 15 December 2016

Concern raised in OCC response of 15 Dec	Alan Baxter/PCL response to our concern	OCC response
Pinch Point on Howes Lane	• Very low usage by pedestrians and cyclists during the hour surveyed therefore can assume low usage throughout the day and therefore very low risk of conflict. • Cyclist use of the footway is illegal anyway and the proposed scheme means they would be less likely to use the footway • Footway widths of no less than 1m at pinchpoints can be confirmed at next iteration of design (S278 application)	PCL, as part of the safety audit of the existing conditions carried out for Alan Baxter, did a ped/cycle count between 0740 and 0840 on Thurs 15 Dec. 2 peds and 3 cyclists were observed using the footway on the SE corner of the Bucknell Rd/Howes Lane jct. I would argue that this hour is not representative as it would not cover all people walking to work at the employment site and it is also unlikely to be representative of leisure users of the bridleway. In any case, I reiterate that even if pedestrian use is low, this does not remove the risk, either of collisions between peds or peds and cycles, or of peds/cycles being swiped by passing vehicle overhangs.

	• Vulnerability of pedestrians given proximity to turning HGVs is noted but risk is discounted due to low number of pedestrians. PCL recommends widening footway to overcome this. • Suggestion that adherence to Inclusive Mobility guidelines is not required because people with mobility issues are unlikely to be using the footway here: 'people with mobility issues tend to undertake short journeys with a specific destination' • Footway extension on north side of Howes Lane could remove the problem provided sufficient widths can be maintained around street furniture. Recommendation to extend footway to Police Training Centre • Proposal of an option to look at relocating the central refuge on Howes Lane to provide additional footway width, and to carry out ped/cycle surveys during peak hours and weekends, for 'further development and finalisation of the junction design'	I also reiterate that, given the knowledge that cyclists use the footway, this must be taken into account. It cannot be concluded that cyclists would be less likely to use the footway in the proposed scheme. The Alan Baxter note says that 'experienced and confident cyclists (who are more likely to be on the carriageway than the footway) will position themselves so that they are close to the middle of the lane with vehicles following behind them' making it '…relatively easy for them to move across to the right hand lane on approach to the signals.' This reinforces my point, because the <u>less</u> confident cyclists are still likely to use the footway, as well as ones trying to avoid the queues. The provision of advanced stop lines would have little benefit as there is insufficient space to provide a lane leading into them, so cyclists would not be able to get to the front of the queue to enter the ASL box. I strongly refute the suggestion that people with mobility issues should not necessarily be catered for in this scheme, for reasons of inclusivity. In any case there is no basis for the suggestion that this kind of user would not wish to use this route. OCC engineers' professional opinion is that space at the junction is so constrained, that sufficient footway widths could not be found at the next iteration of the design, and that the scheme would not be deliverable as it would not pass its technical/safety audit. The footway on the northern side of Howes Lane would be welcomed if there is sufficient space. However, the applicant has not demonstrated that this is feasible. Even though it would make the footway on the south side largely redundant, the

		distance from the kerb to the garden fence on the south side could not be reduced further, as sufficient verge is required for maintenance.
Crossing point on Bucknell Rd between Howes Lane and Lords Lane	• Proposals provide better visibility between pedestrians waiting to cross and vehicles turning left out of Howes Lane, as well as better awareness of pedestrians under signalisation, in the proposed scheme compared with the current situation. • Signalisation improves the opportunities for crossing safely here, even without a pedestrian phase, and also increases the predictability of vehicle movements, allowing regular users to learn when in the traffic signal phasing, it is safe to cross. • Proposal of an option to consider a pedestrian phase on the assumption that it would not be called every cycle (and therefore may not impact on capacity).	CPL has carried out a Stage 3 safety audit for Alan Baxter, of the existing arrangements. Please see discussion of that safety audit below as we do not accept its findings and it does not agree with the independent safety audit carried out for the recent mitigation scheme at the junction. The predictability argument is not conclusive, but even if I was prepared to concede this point, we still have significant concerns about this crossing point. The crossing point is at a pinch point where the tactiles would be only 0.7m wide (between the kerb and the bridge abutment wall) at their northern point, and vehicle tracking is extremely close to the kerb. Also, on rechecking the drawings, the intervisibility zone is well below DMRB standard (and here I have to correct my previous comment that the intervisibility was adequate) due to the major obstruction of the bridge wall. Whilst there is intervisibility between the stop line on Howes Lane and the crossing point, DMRB requires intervisibility between points 2.5m back from the stop line extended across the carriageway, which the proposed scheme does not provide for, so it does not meet standards. There is a risk that the change to the kerbline could make it easier for vehicles to take the left turn faster than at present. On a green signal, drivers will not hesitate in order to give way to traffic from the right, and may in fact accelerate up to the traffic signals and take the corner quickly, in order not to miss the

		green signal, putting pedestrians at risk. Having less than standard intervisibility due to the bridge wall may well exacerbate this risk. Intervisibility between points behind the stop line is primarily required to cater for instances when traffic signals fail and drivers need to see when it is safe to proceed. The fact that the scheme does not meet the standard could well be a reason that a S278 agreement cannot be reached. In terms of pedestrian safety, pedestrian phases would be welcomed, but would have the potential to reduce the capacity of the junction and would need to be modelled. The assumptions regarding frequency of call only once every 7.5 cycles would need to be tested against surveys with pedestrian demand growthed up in line with traffic growth. This would then need to be demonstrated through updating the LinSig model.
Signal equipment and traffic signs		We are agreed that there are likely to be ways of accommodating signage and traffic signals so as not to create an obstruction on the footways but this would need to be demonstrated.
Vehicle tracking	• Proposals are an improvement on current situation. • There is scope to refine the design 'to accommodate instances where swept paths show vehicles crossing the centre line and coming close to the kerb line' • Combination of low ped and HGV use means low risk of	CPL has carried out a Stage 3 safety audit for Alan Baxter, of the existing arrangements. Please see discussion of that safety audit below as we do not accept its findings and it does not agree with the independent safety audit carried out for the recent mitigation scheme at the junction. OCC engineers' professional opinion is that space at the junction is so constrained, that there is no scope to widen the carriageway to address tracking issues, without reducing the footways unacceptably.

	conflict in comparison to existing situation. • Design of central refuge is in accordance with current guidance. • Swept path in any case provides a margin of safety. • Containment kerbs may be used to prevent damage to structures.	I do not understand the statement that the swept path provides a margin of safety. It is based on the actual vehicle widths of the design vehicles including their wing mirrors. The notes on the swept path drawings state: '*The computer programme assumes an 'optimum vehicle' in terms of performance and driver ability and hence additional areas for unrestricted movement may be required.'* Whilst it is acknowledged that the refuges would be of benefit to pedestrians, they result in very tight tracking which would only be achieved by an 'optimum vehicle', implying that in practice the situation could be worse than shown in the drawings. HGV use of the junction will inevitably increase as a result of construction and development around Bicester. Pedestrian use of the junction will increase in proportion with general traffic growth. This means the frequency of potential conflict will increase. It is acknowledged that the refuges are 1.5m wide and therefore in accordance with current guidance in this respect. The use of containment kerbs as satisfactory to prevent damage to the bridge structure, given that the kerb would move to only 700m from the structure, has not been discussed with Network Rail and there is no certainty that this would be accepted by Network Rail at the approval stage.

Table 2: OCC comments on the PCL Stage 3 safety audit commissioned by Alan Baxter on existing arrangements at the junctions of Bucknell Rd/Howes Lane/Lords Lane

Concern raised in PCL Stage 3 Safety Audit	**OCC response**
3.1.1 Vehicles accelerating off roundabout onto Bucknell Rd S at risk of collision with vehicles waiting to turn right into Howes Lane.	Problem not identified in TMS Stage 3 safety audit. If considered a safety concern this could be addressed by trimming vegetation and additional warning signage.
3.2.1 High entry speeds from Lords Lane into roundabout resulting in a potential for single vehicle loss of control collisions and collisions with other vehicles entering the roundabout.	Problem not identified in TMS Stage 3 safety audit. If considered a safety concern this could potentially be addressed by reducing the speed limit although this would be subject to consultation.
3.2.2 High speed turning movements of vehicles turning left from Bucknell Rd S into Howes Lane, resulting in collisions with vehicles turning right into Howes Lane from Bucknell rd N.	Problem not identified in TMS Stage 3 safety audit. If considered a safety concern the introduction of speed reduction measures could be investigated.
3.2.3 Vehicles turning right into Howes Lane cutting across the exit right turn lane resulting in a conflict with oncoming vehicles.	Problem not identified in TMS Stage 3 safety audit. Tracking shows that the right turn can be achieved within the markings. Visibility at the junction is sufficient that drivers can see clearly whether the lane is occupied before deciding to cut the corner.
3.3.1 Carriageway width across Howes Lane at its junction with Bucknell Road, resulting in pedestrians getting caught in the road resulting in conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.	Current width is approximately 9m, below the distance at which a pedestrian crossing refuge is required (10m). If this is considered a safety concern, speed reduction measures could be investigated.
3.3.2 Poor visibility at dropped crossing resulting in a pedestrian stepping into the carriageway when it is not safe to do so and resulting in a collision.	This potential problem was identified in the TMS Stage 3 safety audit: 'inter-visibility between pedestrians at this location and left turning drivers from Howes lane is restricted by the railway bridge structure, although it is acknowledged that this appears to be on the natural pedestrian desire line. Poor inter-visibility may lead to vehicle to pedestrian collisions.' The recommendation of the safety audit was to investigate extending the footway northwards and extending the splitter island of the roundabout

	for a pedestrian crossing point. However, it was considered that this would be too removed from the desire line and that pedestrians would not make the diversion, and that there is visibility between pedestrians and drivers giving way. If this remains a safety concern then warning signs on Howes Lane could be installed. The PCL safety audit reports an apparent injury accident at this location having occurred immediately prior to the auditors being on site. However, the accident was not witnessed and has not been reported to the Police, thus its cause and severity are not known.
3.3.3 Lack of crossing facilities on Bucknell Rd S of the junction with Howes Lane – concern that peds would use the narrow island with double height kerbs, which could result in collisions between pedestrians and motor vehicles.	Currently there is an island with double height kerbs, to highlight the environmental weight limit zone. This has not previously been identified as a pedestrian desire line, but a dropped crossing could potentially be installed if this is considered a safety hazard.
3.4.1 Proximity of sign to carriageway on Howes Lane approach to the junction with Bucknell Road – risk of side swipe collisions.	Problem not identified in TMS Stage 3 safety audit, and is not considered a safety issue. This highlights the constraints of this location, which would become more of an issue in the proposed scheme, which would bring the kerbline closer to the highway boundary.
3.4.2 Vegetation obscuring signage on Bucknell Road S resulting in late decision making and sudden braking.	This problem could easily be rectified through trimming the vegetation.

Note: The original TMS audit identified only three concerns:

- Overrunning of the verge on the NW corner of Bucknell Rd/Howes Lane, leading to a BT chamber in the verge becoming exposed. To address this, the verge has been hard surfaced. It is worth noting that under the proposed scheme, the chamber would be in the carriageway, and it would need to be moved away from heavy vehicle wheel tracks.
- Bucknell Road pedestrian crossing point: visibility, and build-up of detritus. See Table 2 above.
- Partially missing give way triangle road marking on Howes Lane.

2) Road Network Capacity

In terms of the proposed interim signalised scheme at Howes Lane / Bucknell Road and Lord's Lane / Bucknell Road, advice from our consultants is that the latest changes to the proposals would not have a significant impact on the capacity and therefore we are not proposing to re-run the SATURN work at this stage, however, if any further assessment work is required we would need to agree:

- The traffic flows to be used (our latest work on the triggers used the 2016 traffic counts)
- An agreed Reserve Capacity – our consultants had suggested that a negative reserved capacity up to -10% would be acceptable, but OCC does not accept negative capacity with new signalised junctions

Given that the scheme is based on the maximum 120 second traffic signal cycle time, there has to be sufficient reserve capacity within the design as there would be no scope for making adjustments for increased capacity if it did not work.

On the basis that there are significant concerns about the engineering aspects of the scheme and inconclusive evidence of the capacity improvements, it is clear that what needs to happen is confirmation over the delivery of the new tunnel and road.

Joy White
Principal Transport Planner
5 January 2017