

LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO PLANNING CONSULTATION

Planning Application:	103414/FUL/21	Response No.:	02
Location:	Extension and sub-division of existing Homebase store (Unit 1) to create two new retail units (Use Class E(a)) comprising a retail warehouse unit and associated garden centre (Unit 1) and a discount convenience foodstore (Unit 1A), together with associated revised car parking arrangement, landscaping and formation of an additional site egress.		
Description:	Unit 1 Altrincham Retail Park George Richards Way Altrincham WA14 5GR		
Planning Officer:	Bethany Brown		
Date of Receipt:	25/02/2021	Date of Response:	22/03/2021
Extract of Adopted Highway	<p>© Crown copyright and database right 2021. Ordnance Survey 100023172.</p> 		

1 Latest 5-year planning history

98127/FUL/19	Extension, refurbishment, and subdivision of the existing Homebase store to provide a downsized unit for Homebase and a new Class A1 food retail unit. The application also proposes the relocation of the Homebase garden centre, the reconfiguration of the existing car park and associated landscaping, and the creation of a new egress from the site.
--------------	---

2 Appeal

21/00006/REF	Planning Appeal against refusal of planning permission for extension, refurbishment, and subdivision of the existing Homebase store to provide a downsized unit for Homebase and a new Class A1 food retail unit. The application also proposes the relocation of the Homebase garden centre, the reconfiguration of the existing car park and associated landscaping, and the creation of a new egress from the site.
--------------	--

3 Background (for information only)

The LHA has submitted a number of previous responses for planning application 98127/FUL/19 which cover several elements of the submitted application, including the results of traffic modelling, and ANPR survey data for the car park.

Determination for Planning Application 98127/FUL/19 was made on 17 June 2020. In October/November 2020, after determination and prior to the submission of 103414/FUL/21 additional information was provided by the developer, including video evidence which was provided by SCP (it is unclear if SCP took the videos or an independent contractor). LinSig modelled scenarios have also been submitted and these have since been checked by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), and accepted by the LHA and TfGM.

The impact of Covid-19 on future commuter and leisure traffic flows/trip patterns is still unknown. However, for the previous application the TTP Consulting TA for 98127/FUL/19 (dated May 2019) comprised:

- Manual traffic surveys completed on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th March 2016 (1600-1900 / 1100-1700 hrs) to support 91125/FUL/17 (and the now lapsed planning permission for the approved egress on the western side of the park);
- TRICS (The Trip Rate Information Computer System) data in England, outside London; and
- DfT traffic data comparison

To expand on the points above, whilst the manual survey results are now several years old they are still acceptable in highway terms, and as per the comparison made against DfT data by the applicant, it would not be expected that there would have been any significant changes in traffic flow at this location (excluding the impact of Covid-19 lockdown and trading restrictions). The previous application was submitted in May 2019, and the manual survey data was deemed accepted at that time and this position has not changed for the new application. Had the Covid-19 pandemic not been a factor over the last 12-

months, the LHA would likely have requested new surveys be undertaken for completeness, but this would have been in addition to, not instead of the 2016 surveys.

With regards to the latest highway technical note provided by SCP for the new application “*The trip generating potential for the proposed development was calculated within the previous TA. It was previously agreed that traffic growth factor would not be applied*”. It is further noted that whilst the existing Homebase store would be reduced in size, the number of trips associated with it have not been changed.

- Forecast data is provided for the proposed development which considers by-pass/diverted trips (already on the network (45%)), linked trips (already visiting the retail park (15%)), and new trips (new to the network (40%)). The data considers the site location (i.e. an existing retail park), and the retail nature of the surrounding area.
- Capacity assessments provided within the previous TA have been updated following consultation with Trafford Council and TfGM, and the LinSig models submitted during the latter part of 2020 have been analysed and accepted by TfGM Urban Traffic Control (the existing traffic signal network is operated and controlled by UTC), and Trafford Council.
- With regards to the LinSig models, traffic scenarios during the PM and Saturday Peak have been assessed for the baseline and the proposed development, and for all scenarios the results indicate that there would be no expected operational issues at the signalised junctions. With the proposed development in place, the reported maximum Degree of Saturation would be 76.0% for the weekday PM, and 89.9% for the Saturday PM peak hour (it is generally accepted that DoS of 90% or less represents satisfactory signal operation).
- Amended flow diagrams have also been supplied by SCP which reflect previous comments made concerning underestimating the degree to which the egress would be used.
- The methods used to forecast trip rates for the proposed development are widely recognised and accepted, and in common use throughout the UK transport planning industry.

It is accepted that Covid-19 will have had an impact to current trip rates and travel patterns, and this will be true for many planning applications submitted during the pandemic for which future traffic impact on the highway network is a consideration. Whilst Trafford Council and TfGM have previously raised concerns for the proposed development the recently submitted LinSig models referred to above have been accepted by both TfGM and Trafford Council.

For information, it is observed that the video evidence demonstrates vehicle lane change manoeuvres at the location of the previously proposed egress, in addition to the presence of on-road cyclists. The videos also show vehicles encroaching on or straddling the lane lines, and the centre hatched road markings.

It is further noted that the new submission provides swept path analysis including vehicle tracking speeds, and an amended design which proposes carriageway realignment to achieve wider lanes, a left-turn only egress located further away from the George Richards Way signalised junction with the A56 weaving area and stop lines, a reduced egress gradient, and a standard traffic island design (not the previously submitted 'dog bone' shaped island) that is shorter in length and which, no longer stops immediately adjacent to the junction pedestrian crossing area, or results in an unnecessarily long length of pedestrian guardrail.

4 Our Understanding of the Proposals (103414/FUL/21)

It is the understanding of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) that the application seeks approval for the extension, refurbishment, and subdivision of the existing Homebase store to provide a downsized unit for Homebase and a new Class A1 food retail unit. The application also proposes the relocation of the Homebase garden centre, the reconfiguration of the existing car park and associated landscaping, and the creation of a new egress from the site

5 Vehicle Access and Egress

It is proposed to utilise the existing access arrangements to the retail park and the associated western and eastern car parks. With regards to egress, future customers will be able to utilise the existing retail park egress arrangements, for which it has been demonstrated that the proposed increase in traffic volume will not have a significant detrimental impact to traffic flows and queuing at the existing signals.

It is further proposed to provide a separate left-turn egress only from the eastern car park onto George Richards Way. The egress which, is similar in design at its junction with George Richards Way to a previous application, is located further away from the weaving (lane changing) area for the junction with the A56 Manchester Road, and closer to the main retail park entrance/exit at the signalised junction with Davenport Lane. The ramp has also been redesigned to provide a maximum gradient of 1:20 (5%).

Submitted boundary plan drawing number 14366-115 Rev. H dated 19 March 2021 shows an intention to plant trees to the rear of the parking bays, just outside the 2.4m x 43m visibility splay. The existing knee rail fence will also be set-back to ensure it does not impact the splay. The existing trees have the potential to impact visibility to and from the location of the proposed egress and as at time of writing, the proposed species of tree to be planted is unknown. As such the LHA would request a condition to any subsequent approval of planning permission that the egress shall not be brought into use until an unobstructed (minimum) 2.4m x 43m visibility splay is provided and said (unobstructed) visibility splay shall be retained at all times thereafter.

5.1 Proposed Left-Turn Only Egress Swept Path Analysis

The swept path analysis indicates a box van would need to take a convoluted route around the eastern car park in order to use the egress, including the need to 'cut across' an internal give way (two-way traffic). Whilst the internal path vehicles would take to access the egress are not expected to have any impact on the adopted highway, the LHA is concerned that the analysis indicates a 7.5t box van could strike the kerb at (a) the top of the egress potentially leading to tyre damage and an incident at this location or a delayed incident further along the highway, and (b) at the junction with George Richards Way and the same location where pedestrians would wait to cross. It is further noted that upon entering the adopted highway the vehicle would need to straddle two-lanes in order to make the turn. Whilst the vehicle speed used for tracking has been given (16 kph/10 mph) the assumed level of driver accuracy is unknown, but it is considered that the driver of a vehicle of this size would need to be precise when navigating the egress, with little room for driver error.

Therefore, in the interest of road safety the LHA would request the type and size of vehicle using the egress is restricted and would requests a 2.15m height restriction barrier is installed across the top and bottom of the egress. The LHA would accept this amendment being secured by condition to any subsequent approval of planning permission.

6 Pedestrian Access

The proposals include carriageway widening which will necessitate the realignment of the footway. However, it is noted that a 2m wide footway will still be provided (drawing number SCP/190052/SK08 Revision C), and as noted above, all works undertaken on the adopted highway will require the developer to enter into a S278 agreement.

7 Proposed Traffic Island

It is proposed to provide a traffic island on George Richards Way, however, in comparison to the previously submitted designs under planning application 98127/FUL/19 the island is shorter and the proposed 'dog bone' shape is replaced with a standard configuration.

The width of the proposed traffic island shown on drawing number SCP/190052/SK08 Revision C is 0.9m. There is a requirement for all vertical street furniture to be set back a minimum distance of 0.450m from the edge of the carriageway. Other than the width of the island, at this stage no detail is provided for the proposed keep left bollards and pedestrian guardrail and the LHA is concerned the required set-back will not be achievable. Nevertheless, it is also considered that this concern could be addressed during the design phase of the required S278 agreement.

8 Section 278 Agreement

The developer will be required to enter into a S278 agreement for all proposed highway works. The S278 agreement process will include an LHA technical design check of all submitted highway design drawings for which an administration fee will apply.

It shall be noted that planning permission is not permission to work in the highway. A Highway Agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 must be completed, the bond secured, and the Highway Authority's technical approval and inspection fees paid before any drawings will be considered and approved.

9 Servicing Arrangements

It is proposed to utilise the existing service yard located to the north of the site. The proposed arrangements comprise two to three deliveries a day, outside peak traffic hours. It is noted that the delivery vehicles will also be used to remove waste from the site, negating the need for additional service vehicles.

10 Parking Arrangements

10.1 Car Parking

The proposals would result in a loss of 96 car parking spaces; however, data provided for the two busiest days of the week shows a maximum occupancy level of 47% across the western and eastern car parks. It is suggested that the proposed supermarket will generate the need for circa 84 spaces, taking the maximum car park occupancy level to 60%. As such, and as per the previous application, the LHA accepts a proposed car parking provision of 694 for the retail park (western and eastern car parks).

10.2 Accessibility Car Parking

Information seen states 48 accessibility spaces are currently provided and it is proposed to provide an additional four spaces. Whilst the number of accessibility spaces is below the minimum, it is also noted that disabled Blue Badge holders will also be able to use the proposed parent and child parking spaces (it is proposed to provide ten additional parent and child spaces), thus they will have access to 16 spaces overall. Both the accessibility and parent and child spaces will be located close to the store entrance.

10.3 Motorcycle Parking

No information has been seen for proposed motorcycle parking spaces, and clarification is sought from the developer. However, the LHA would accept the provision of motorcycle parking being secured by condition, should the LPA be minded to approve planning permission.

10.4 Secure Cycle Parking and Storage Arrangements

As stated in the Transport Assessment, eight cycle parking spaces are currently provided outside the entrance to Homebase. To meet the minimum cycle parking standards as defined by SPD3 there is a minimum requirement for six additional cycle spaces. From information seen, it is the understanding of the LHA that it is proposed to provide an extra 16 cycle parking spaces, a number of which will also be covered and suitable for long stay parking, and accessible to employees.

11 Public Rights of Way

Not applicable

12 Requests for Planning Conditions

The LHA would request the following conditions are added to any future grant of planning permission.

12.1 Construction Method Statement

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until such time as a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- a) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- b) deliveries to site;
- c) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- d) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- e) the erection and maintenance of security hoardings including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
- f) wheel washing facilities and any other relevant measures for keeping the highway clean during demolition and construction works, and
- g) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt;
- h) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
- i) days and hours of construction activity on site (in accordance with Trafford Council's recommended hours of operation for construction works), and

j) contact details of site manager to be advertised at the site in case of issues arising.

12.2 Left Turn Only Egress

The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use (comprising Unit 1A or Unit 1, whichever is the sooner) until the left-turn only egress has been constructed;

- a) The location of the egress shall be in accordance with the submitted drawing number SCP/190052/SK08 Revision D;
- b) The maximum gradient of the egress shall not exceed 1:20 (5%);
- c) In accordance with the submitted drawing number SCP/190052/SK08 Revision D, on George Richards Way, for each traffic lane, the minimum unobstructed traffic lane width shall not be less than 3m.

12.3 Left Turn Only Egress: Height Restriction

The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use (comprising Unit 1A or Unit 1, whichever is the sooner) until such time as a 2.15m vehicle height restriction barrier has been installed across the top and bottom of the egress, which shall also include the provision of driver information signs within the car park, in advance of the egress.

12.4 Egress Visibility Splay

Drawing number 14366-115 Rev. H dated 19 March 2021 shows an intention to set back the knee rail fence and plant trees to the rear of the parking bays, just outside the egress 2.4m x 43m visibility splay. The LHA would request a condition that the egress for the development hereby approved shall not be brought into use (comprising Unit 1A or Unit 1, whichever is the sooner) until an unobstructed minimum 2.4m x 43m visibility splay is provided and said (unobstructed) visibility splay shall be retained at all times thereafter.

12.5 Car Park

The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use (comprising Unit 1A or Unit 1, whichever is the sooner) until the car parking spaces and service routes shown on plan ref. 14366-105 F have been laid out and are available for use. The parking spaces and service routes shall be retained at all times thereafter.

12.6 Travel Plan

A full Travel Plan (TP) the development hereby approved shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for review and approval in writing within 6 (six)-months of the first date of operation:

- A firm commitment to targets detailed within the TP is expected, as such measures indicated in the TP shall not be primarily concerned with providing information e.g. timetables for public transport etc, a map of the local area etc.;
- The TP shall include realistic and quantifiable targets, and
- The TP shall include effective objectives and incentives to reduce car travel and increase use of non-car modes for staff
- TP targets shall be reviewed and monitored against the baseline which will be established within 3-months of the first date of operation;
- Employee travel survey shall be completed every 12 (twelve)-months from the date of first operation, and for a minimum period of ten years (i.e. minimum 12 (twelve) no. surveys excluding baseline surveys);
- The TP shall be implemented for a period of not less than 10 (ten) years from the first date of operation.

13 Informative

13.1 Works on the Public Highway (Section 278)

The development hereby approved includes the carrying out of work on the adopted highway. You are advised that before undertaking work on the adopted highway you must enter into a highway agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, which would specify the works and the terms and conditions under which they are to be carried out. Sufficient time shall be provided for the preparation and signing of the Agreement.

Planning permission is not permission to work in the highway. A Highway Agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 must be completed, the bond secured, and the Highway Authority's technical approval and inspection fees paid before any drawings will be considered and approved.

14 Summary

14.1 Outcome

01. There are no objections on highway grounds to the proposals subject the requested conditions being added to any subsequent approval of planning permission.

02. The developer is hereby advised that before undertaking work on the adopted highway a highway agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 must be entered into which, will specify the works, and the terms and conditions under which they are to be carried out
03. The LHA is not submitting a refusal for this application for the following reasons:
- I. the amended location of the egress, this being further away from the junction with the A56 and namely the left-turn diverge, the weaving (vehicle lane changing) area, and the signal stop lines. As such, the left-turn only egress proposed by this application would not be expected to have a severe detrimental impact to road safety along the public highway at this location, and as such a refusal is not justified on highway grounds in accordance with the NPPF;
 - II. the gradient of the proposed egress is reduced to a maximum gradient of 1:20 (5%);
 - III. the provision of scheme designs which reflect the layout of George Richards Way at this location (conflicting adopted highway layouts were provided for planning application 98127/FUL/19 which despite requests from the LHA, were not amended);
 - IV. lanes widths are clearly illustrated on the plan, and the amended design now includes an intention to widen the carriageway to achieve minimum 3m wide traffic lanes, excluding the centre hatched road markings (for the previous application the LHA was concerned the road widths would be too narrow, and confirmation of unobstructed lane widths was requested by the LHA for planning application 98127/FUL/19, but not provided)
 - V. a standard design, shorter length traffic island will be provided, and there is no longer an intention to provide an unnecessarily long length of pedestrian guardrail (reference should be made to the LHA's earlier comments for the previously proposed non-standard traffic island for planning application 98127/FUL/19)
 - VI. the provision of swept path analysis including vehicle tracking speeds (requested by the LHA for planning application 98127/FUL/19, but not provided)
 - VII. provision of personal injury collision analysis (requested by the LHA for planning application 98127/FUL/19, but not provided)
 - VIII. In October/November 2020, after determination of planning application 98127/FUL/19 and prior to the submission of 103414/FUL/21, additional information was provided by the developer, including video evidence (it is unclear if SCP took the videos or an independent contractor). The LHA previously asked the developer to substantiate their claim that lane changing along George Richards Way would not be negatively impacted by the proposed egress under planning application 98127/FUL/19, and to demonstrate the proposals would not have a severe impact to road safety, but the information was not provided at that time.
 - IX. LinSig modelled scenarios were also submitted after determination of planning application 98127/FUL/19 and prior to the submission of 103414/FUL/21 (this application). Again, these were previously requested for planning application 98127/FUL/19, but not provided.

Relevant Comments and Observations

Whilst the following comments and observations should not be deemed a recommendation, or an instruction made by the LHA, it is also considered that they are relevant to the proposed development and thus, worthy of note.

A. The Need for an Egress

Whilst not a consideration to planning, based on information seen the LHA would not agree that a capacity issue has been demonstrated for the proposed development that would necessitate the need for a new left turn only egress at this location.

It is understood TfGM has also questioned the need for an egress onto a two-lane single carriageway road, that will be located between two signalised junctions and close to the main entrance and exit for the retail park. There is a concern shared by both TfGM and the LHA that the introduction of the egress could create a road safety problem where none currently exists.

TfGM has also requested a continuous footway is provided, however, the LHA has reservations regarding the use of what would be a standalone a feature (i.e. no others are located in this area). In addition, the Royal National Institute for the Blind has raised concerns regarding the use of continuous footways and their impact on blind and visually impaired pedestrians and as such, a feature of this type should only be taken forward following design and use consultations with relevant stakeholder groups. It is considered that the TfGM request could be discussed further within the S278 public highway works design process.

However, notwithstanding our comments above, whilst the LHA does not fully support the provision of the proposed left-turn only egress at this location, it is also our view that it has been demonstrated by the applicant that the egress proposed by planning application 103414/FUL/21 would not be expected to have a **severe** detrimental impact to road safety along the public highway at this location. As such, the LHA could not justify a refusal in accordance with the NPPF.

B. Internal Car Park Layout at the Location of the Egress

Although not part of the adopted highway (and therefore not included in the formal LHA response above), it is considered that the proposed internal layout for the amended egress could increase the risk of conflict occurring between vehicles manoeuvring around the eastern car park and those attempting to turn onto the proposed new egress. The applicant may wish to consider undertaking a safety assessment of the proposed eastern car park layout.

C. Possible alternative layout on George Richards Way

Discussions took place in August 2020 relating to the proposed development and the associated left-turn only egress, which included reducing George Richards Way to one-lane between its signalised junctions with Davenport Lane and the A56 (excluding the three-lane junction approach to the A56), and the

provision of an advisory on-road cycle lane. A preliminary design drawing and traffic modelling was provided in October 2020 for this option and both the LHA and TfGM stated at that time, that in principle, this alternative arrangement would be acceptable, but it would appear that, for reasons unknown to the LHA and TfGM, that the applicant has chosen not to proceed with this option.

D. Possible alternative location for the proposed egress

It is observed by the LHA that it may also be possible to relocate the egress slightly further west and closer to the main exit of the retail park. It would not be expected that vehicles exiting the signals will seek to change lanes immediately, and drivers will likely assess their position before making their moving. It is further considered that visibility to the right for drivers exiting the development via the egress could be achieved. However, it is also noted that this would require the applicant to undertake a partial redesign of the eastern car park layout, and the egress would be moved even closer to the main entrance and exit, albeit still within the eastern car park and not a significant location from the proposed egress.

Elaine Hendren, 22 March 2021