



Developments Affecting Trunk Roads and Special Roads

Highways England Planning Response (HEPR 16-01)

Formal Recommendation to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Alan Shepherd
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To: St Helens Council - Jennifer Bolton

CC: transportplanning@dft.gsi.gov.uk
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Council's Reference: P/2020/0061/HYBR

Referring to the planning application referenced above, dated 29th January 2020, regarding a hybrid planning application for the following development (major development); (i) Full Planning Permission for the erection of a B8 logistics warehouse, with ancillary offices, associated car parking, infrastructure and landscaping; and (ii) Outline Planning Permission for Manufacturing (B2) and Logistics (B8) development with ancillary offices and associated access infrastructure works (detailed matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval) on land to the West of Omega South & South of the M62, Bold, St Helens, notice is hereby given that Highways England's formal recommendation is that we:

- a) ~~offer no objection;~~
- b) ~~recommend that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted (see Annex A – Highways England recommended Planning Conditions);~~
- c) recommend that planning permission not be granted for a specified period (see Annex A – further assessment required);

d) ~~recommend that the application be refused (see Annex A — Reasons for recommending Refusal).~~

Highways Act Section 175B is / is not relevant to this application.¹

This represents Highways England formal recommendation and is copied to the Department for Transport as per the terms of our Licence.

Should you disagree with this recommendation you should consult the Secretary of State for Transport, as per the Town and Country Planning (Development Affecting Trunk Roads) Direction 2018, via transportplanning@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

Signature: 	Date: 28th April 2020
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¹ Where relevant, further information will be provided within Annex A.

Annex A ~~Highways England recommended Planning Conditions /~~
~~Highways England recommended further assessment required /~~
~~Highways England recommended Refusal.~~

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND (“we”) has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

Following a meeting with the developers, a technical note was produced to address the issues that Highways England raised. Highways England undertook a review of this information, and identified a number of outstanding issues.

TRANSYT model, manual lane balancing

Previous comment:

“Modifications to the distribution of traffic between lanes in the TRANSYT model have been made manually and these should be explained.”

Developers Consultant Response:

Routing of traffic within the network is initially decided based on the ‘lane balancing’ allocation mode within TRANSYT. This mode allocates traffic flow to TRANSYT paths, for a given OD pair, in such a way as to ‘balance’ the flow-to-saturation-flow ratio (Y values) on the first downstream signalled part of each path that connects that OD pair. However, after reviewing the allocation of flows, some adjustments to flows were undertaken based on logical routing and lane occupancy within the model at downstream links. Much of the adjustments made were to account for no internal weaving on the circulatory carriageway within the models.

Our Comment:

Below is a quote from the TRANSYT user guide regarding lane balancing traffic assignment as applied in the model.

“... This mode is useful for modelling single junctions (e.g. crossroads, staggers and roundabouts). It takes account of the saturation flow of each traffic stream (max flow for give-ways), while it is NOT influenced by the travel time through the junction – which reflects reasonably well the nature of decision making required by drivers who

are travelling through a single junction and choosing the most appropriate path through it.”

This therefore suggests drivers choose their lane through the junction based on the first stop line they reach and this is why lane balancing traffic distribution is applied. It continues:

“The flow allocation modes provided simply ‘aid’ the process of establishing suitable traffic flows throughout the network. Inevitably there will be some situations where the allocation of flows by these methods will not be suitable and in such situations users have the freedom to specify flows in a more direct manner.”

We would therefore suggest that should the developer’s consultant wish to retain adjustments to routing it should be justified through, for example, observations of the existing traffic distribution between lanes on the Burtonwood South approach, appropriate sections of the circulatory or exits if survey videos are available. Or other amendments to the model if appropriate.

Scenario 5 flow discrepancy & reassessment

Previous comment:

“There appears to be a minor flow discrepancy between the flows provided in the report and within the model in Scenario 5 at M62 J8.”

Developers Consultant Response:

In response to the spreadsheet error which was addressed in Comment 8, we have updated the M62 Junction 8 modelling. In addressing this error, we also noticed that the HGV flows for the Mountpark and Zones 1-2 (original consent) developments had not been converted to PCUs. This has also been included within the revised modelling.

This updated modelling also means that any flow discrepancies have been addressed.

The operation of the existing M62 Junction 8 signalised gyratory has been assessed using TRANSYT and the results of the assessment are provided.

While the results indicate a DOS increase to above 90% (M62 EB off-slip in the AM / Skyline Drive in the PM), the actual increase in queuing on these arms is 3 PCUs or less, therefore representing a very small change in performance. It is also worth noting that in the AM, Scenario 5 (proposed development and mitigation) provides a

substantial reduction in queuing on the M62 EB off-slip arm in comparison to Scenario 2 (currently committed).

In addition to this, our assessment of Scenario 5 assumes that the Burtonwood Road Services site still has the majority of its B1 / B2 / B8 development to be constructed. As is discussed in response to Comment 6, a large amount of the site has already been built on, with far lower trip generators in the AM peak than the original consent, meaning that we have likely overestimated the future impact of this committed development on the road network. The true level of trip generation from this site is likely to represent a reduction in vehicles on the M62 Junction 8 roundabout, enabling the junction to operate within capacity in 2021 with the addition of development traffic.

Our comment

A revised assessment has been undertaken including the amended B8 traffic flows, as well as amended HGV trips for the Mountpark and Zones 1-2 B2/B8 developments, which had not previously been converted into PCUs.

The Technical Note provided only appears to contain AM peak traffic flows in Appendix A. Please could the PM peak flows also be provided.

The results of the scenario 5 assessment (with mitigation) indicate that generally the junction will operate over practical capacity but within absolute capacity. Three lanes (M62 Eastbound off slip in the AM and Skyline Drive in the PM) exceed a DoS value of 90%. The analysis also indicates that the increase in queuing on these arms is predicted to be three PCUs or less. However, we consider that there are other points that still need to be addressed regarding the manual intervention in traffic assignment between lanes and potential unequal lane usage due to exit merging. As such, the results may be revised.

Lane utilisation sensitivity test

Previous comment:

“The proposed mitigation scenario promotes using the two lanes available on the Skyline Drive exit. The exit merges from two lanes to one approximately 100m from the junction. Research has shown the presence of exit merges can influence upstream lane choice. We therefore suggest a sensitivity test should be undertaken with a 75/25% nearside / offside split in traffic to the Skyline Drive exit to understand potential sensitivities in operational performance.”

Developers Consultant Response:

The proposed mitigation scenario models peak conditions experienced by the roundabout. As a result, it is considered appropriate that all available lanes will be

fully utilised by traffic. Furthermore, observed operation of the existing roundabout show that HGVs exiting the roundabout onto Skyline Drive stick to the nearside lane whilst the majority of cars stick to the offside lane in order to pass the slower moving vehicles. It is therefore considered that the current split of traffic appropriately reflects anticipated operation.

Our Comment:

This was requested to inform Highways England on the potential range of outcomes that may result from variation in lane utilisation. We would therefore recommend that these sensitivity tests are completed.

Highways England therefore recommends that **planning permission not be granted until 28th May 2020** to allow time for the information requested from the developer to be reviewed and provide time for any the further information that may be requested.

This response represents our formal recommendation with regard to planning application P/2020/0061/HYBR and has been prepared by Benjamin Laverick, the Assistant Asset Manager for Cheshire and Warrington within Highways England.