

## HIGHWAYS TECHNICAL NOTE

Site: Land at Straw Mill Hill, Tovil

Client: Skillcrown Homes

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Date: April 2016

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### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This report has been prepared to provide additional technical information to Maidstone Borough Council (the LPA) and Kent County Council Highways and Transportation (the highway authority) regarding matters relating to highways and transportation associated with the proposed residential development at the above site.
- 1.1.2 A planning application has been submitted for the above site (ref: 15/505441/OUT) and went before the planning committee to be determined on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The application was deferred to be considered at a later committee meeting for 'further discussion of potential highway improvements specifically in Straw Mill Hill and to circulate the viability report to Members'.
- 1.1.3 A meeting was held on site with Members of the Planning Committee, Brendan Wright of KCC Highways and Transportation and James Bailey of Maidstone Borough Council on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to understand the perceived issues they had. This Highways Technical Note shall provide evidence to Officer's and Committee members on three distinctive issues which are:
- Achievement of access and works to Straw Mill Hill;
  - Improvements to Straw Mill Hill / Farleigh Hill junction; and
  - Access to the adjacent development site.
- 1.1.4 Each shall be addressed in turn below in addition to other points to be considered and noted by all.

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## 1.2 Achievement of Access and Works to Straw Mill Hill

- 1.2.1 Drawings of the proposed access arrangement as appended to the Transport Assessment submitted as part of the planning application (ref: CC/10664, dated June 2015) were used to inform all of the locations of the proposed vehicular and pedestrian access arrangement to better understand the changes proposed to the public highway.
- 1.2.2 It was raised that the proposed access was subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and following extensive consultation with the Highway Authority, including the KCC Developments Agreements Manager. The proposed means of access is identical to that proposed as part of the previous planning application for the site which was agreed in principle as part of the resolution to grant planning permission.
- 1.2.3 It has been recommended to note that during later Road Safety Audits, Auditors should review whether additional signage would be necessary on the westbound approach to the proposed vehicular access to provide greater forewarning of the access to approaching drivers. It is proposed that this motion is placed as an Informative on the planning permission should it be granted to ensure that it is suitably acknowledged in the future.

## 1.3 Improvements to Straw Mill Hill / Farleigh Hill Junction

- 1.3.1 As part of the previous planning application for the site which had a resolution to grant planning subject to S106, it was requested that the applicant would undertake S278 works to improve the existing situation at the junction between Straw Mill Hill and Farleigh Hill. There is local concern regarding the junction with the primary cause being that of safety. This is primarily borne as a consequence of the limited visibility afforded to egressing vehicles from Straw Mill Hill looking west along Farleigh Hill.
- 1.3.2 Whilst these matters would have previously been addressed at a post application stage, the applicant now wishes to outline proposed works that would suitably address the concerns of the planning committee.
- 1.3.3 It is noted that at present, it is possible to achieve a 2.4m x 43m visibility splay to the west up Farleigh Hill if taken to the centre line of the carriageway. Given the location of the traffic islands along the length of the road, it is considered that there is no opportunity for vehicles to perform overtaking manoeuvres and therefore visibility to the centre line as opposed to the nearside kerb would normally be acceptable. This demonstrates that the necessary visibility can be achieved for a 30mph road from the access. This can be seen in drawing DHA/10664-T-04/P1 as included at **Appendix A** of this report.
- 1.3.4 Vehicles approaching the Straw Mill Hill junction in a Maidstone-bound (eastbound) direction along Farleigh Hill are afforded ample forward visibility to the junction to observe vehicles seeking to egress and therefore prepare to slow down should a vehicle egress. This can be seen in Figure 0-1 below where visibility in excess of 140m is achievable.



**Figure 0-1: Forward Visibility for Eastbound Vehicles Approaching Straw Mill Hill Junction (courtesy of Google)**

- 1.3.5 Nevertheless, the junction is acknowledged to be difficult to manoeuvre from when egressing from Straw Mill Hill onto Farleigh Hill and consequently it is proposed that some alterations are made to assist drivers and improve safety. Albeit it has been demonstrated within the Transport Assessment that there is no existing pattern of incidents that would be exacerbated by the proposed development.
- 1.3.6 The geometry of the junction has been reviewed extensively and unfortunately it is not possible to improve the existing visibility at the junction to the west without narrowing the width of the carriageway or the footways along Farleigh Hill. At present, the vehicle running lanes measure approximately 3 metres in width and it would be unacceptable to reduce this width given the need to accommodate Heavy Goods Vehicles, particularly when consideration is given to the local commercial properties in this area.
- 1.3.7 As such, it is proposed that the approach to the junction is significantly enhanced in a manner that clearly accentuates the approaches to the junction. It is proposed that high-friction surfacing is installed along an approximate 115m length along Farleigh Hill on either side of Straw Mill Hill. High-friction surfacing is of a different colour to tarmac and as such provides a clear visual aid to approaching vehicles, and highlights the existence of a junction ahead. Furthermore, the surfacing will act to significantly improve the skid resistance value of the road, allowing vehicles to brake in a shorter distance and far safer controlled manner should a vehicle unexpectedly egress from Straw Mill Hill. This treatment is particularly beneficial in wet or icy weather.

- 1.3.8 To further accentuate the approaching junction, it is proposed that a warning, right turn ahead sign is installed on the nearside of the carriageway across the frontage of Aldi in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual, diagram 506.1.
- 1.3.9 Drawing DHA/10664-T-04/P1 has been prepared and included at **Appendix A** of this report which shows the proposed mitigation clearly.

### **Signalisation**

- 1.3.10 It has been the request of interested parties to consider the potential to signalise the junction in question.
- 1.3.11 It is considered that the residual vehicle generation of the site (when comparing it to that which could be exhibited in planning terms) cannot reasonably justify the mitigation that would be proposed by the signalisation of the junction.
- 1.3.12 The operation of the junction in its current form has been modelled using industry standard junction capacity modelling software (PICADY) which was outlined within the supporting Transport Assessment in Section 6. It was clearly demonstrated that the junction would continue to operate well within its design capacity with no excessive queuing whatsoever.
- 1.3.13 Paragraph 204 of the NPPF relates to this issue specifically whereby:

*“Planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:*

- *Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
- *Directly related to the development; and*
- *Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”*

- 1.3.14 It is considered that the signalisation of the junction would not meet any of the above tests in relation to the proposed development and therefore the need to signalise would contravene the policy stipulations of the NPPF.
- 1.3.15 Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that for the future consideration of the planning committee and the highway authority, the amount of highway land available at the junction is not sufficient to accommodate all of the infrastructure necessary to install traffic signals. The constrained carriageway and footway widths on the eastbound Farleigh Hill approach to the junction is too narrow to accommodate the signalisation equipment necessary without undue narrowing of the footway and impact on pedestrians, and therefore it is found to be unfeasible.

## **1.4 Other Outstanding Points**

- 1.4.1 In addition to the information set out above, it is noted that the applicant is willing to have a condition upon the planning application to deliver a point of access which could be linked to the adjacent site also known as ‘Land off Farleigh Hill’ for 272 dwellings.

- 1.4.2 The applicant is willing to construct an access suitable for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians up to the point where it adjoins the neighbouring site at a point to be determined by Maidstone Borough Council.
- 1.4.3 This will not be a primary means of access but will seek to provide choice between the two sites and improve permeability should it be constructed. This in turn should seek to further reduce traffic along Straw Mill Hill and at the junction with Farleigh Hill.

## **1.5 Conclusions**

- 1.5.1 It is therefore concluded that the proposed mitigation works as outlined above provide significant improvement to the junction between Farleigh Hill and Straw Mill Hill.
- 1.5.2 Therefore, it is believed that there are no grounds by which to object to the proposed means of access for either pedestrians or vehicles in terms of highway safety, amenity and capacity.

Appendix A  
Drawing DHA/10664-T-04/P1 Proposed Junction Improvements

