Land at Downlands Farm, Uckfield

Highways and Transport Evidence on behalf of Gleeson Land and John Alison Land and Research Ltd

of

Philip Anthony Bell BEng(Hons) MCIT MILT MCIHT

SUMMARY

PINS Reference: APP/C1435/W/23/3321978
LPA Reference: WD/2022/1637/MEA

motion

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1.0 Qualifications and Experience

1.1 My name is Philip Anthony Bell and I am the Managing Director of Motion. I hold a First Class Bachelor of Engineering Degree in Civil Engineering and a Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) accreditation in advanced road safety engineering. I am a chartered member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and a member of the Institute of Logistics and Transport. I have over 30 years' experience in the field of transportation planning, traffic engineering and highway safety.

1.2 I have extensive experience of highways and transport planning within the residential sector and currently act for many of the major land promoters and housebuilders operating in south-east England. In addition, I have extensive experience of major development proposals within the retail, leisure and commercial sectors.

1.3 My experience includes a period in the Development Studies Department of Wootton Jeffreys Consultants. Subsequently, I worked for Mayer Brown for over 14 years. I was jointly responsible for setting up Motion Consultants Limited in August 2004.

1.4 Motion specialises in advising developers and professionals in the development field on all matters concerning transportation, highways, traffic and road safety and our clients comprise a wide variety of private and public-sector organisations.

2.0 Scope of Evidence

2.1 My evidence is provided on behalf of Gleeson Land and John Alison Land and Research Limited, the 'Appellants' and relates to a hybrid planning application as follows:

"Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 424 no. residential dwellings including affordable housing, the provision of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access and separate emergency access from the Uckfield bypass (A22), pedestrian and cycle access from Snatts Road, open spaces including children's play space, sustainable urban drainage systems, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks; and full planning application comprising creation of a strategic SANG, associated landscaping and car parking, and demolition of existing residential property and other buildings and provision of pedestrian and cycle access from Rocks Road, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks."

2.2 The planning application that is the subject of this Appeal (ref. WD/2022/1637/MEA) was refused by Wealden District Council on 21st April 2023. The Decision Notice (**CD5/1**) lists nine reasons for refusal. My evidence deals specifically with matters relating to highways, traffic and transportation, which are covered by the sixth and seventh reasons for refusal as follows:

> *"6 The proposal has not demonstrated that a safe and suitable access arrangement can be achieved for all users and to reduce dependence on the private car.*
>
> *The scheme would therefore be contrary to Saved Policies EN1, EN2, TR3 and TR13 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998, Spatial Planning Objectives SPO7 and SPO15 and Policies WCS7 and WSC14* [sic] *of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 and the guidance within Chapter 9 of the NPPF.*
>
> *7. The proposal does not satisfactorily demonstrate that there would be an acceptable impact on the surrounding highway network, particularly (though not limited to) Uckfield town centre which is already heavily congested at peak times, nor that safe access can be secured for all parts of the site and scheme, contrary to, to SPO2, SPO12, SPO13 and Policy WCS14 to the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013, Saved Policies TR3 and TR16 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998, coupled with the requirements of paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021."*

2.3 It is apparent from these reasons for refusal that they relate to a lack of information on highways and transportation matters, rather than any fundamental objections to the proposals. Indeed, it is noted on the decision notice that reason 7 can be secured through an appropriate legal agreement and Statement of Common Ground. It is now confirmed within the Transport Statement of Common Ground (**CD1/9**), that subject to the payment of a financial contribution towards the installation and maintenance of an enhanced control system for the town centre junctions, ESCC considers that reason for refusal 7 can be withdrawn.

3.0 Summary and Conclusion

3.1 In summary, my evidence demonstrates the following:

- Safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users.
- The proposals will contribute towards reducing dependence on the private car by offering a genuine choice of transport modes in accordance with policy outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Uckfield town centre provides a range of local services and facilities within circa 2 kilometres, including a selection of places to eat and drink, shops and banks, as well as employment, schools and health facilities.
- The location of the vehicular access on the western boundary of the site (in the opposite direction to the town centre), seeks to support the sustainable transport strategy in influencing whether people choose to drive rather than walk/cycle, particularly where active travel routes are more direct than routes by car.
- The approach to supporting active modes of travel seeks to provide a number of options for future residents, depending on their location within the development, level of mobility and destination, including creation of pedestrian/cycle connections to Rocks Road and Snatts Road and provision of a new strategic active travel link along the A22 and Bellfarm Road.
- New and enhanced facilities for pedestrians and cyclists have been designed having regard to the recommendations of a Non-Motorised User Audit as well as the Uckfield Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan. The proposals take account of existing and future pedestrian/cyclist flows.
- The proposed access arrangements for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists have been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and are all deliverable within the public highway or land forming part of the application site.
- The A22 active travel route to the town centre is comparable in terms of journey times for cyclists to the Fir Tree Grove route, is fully segregated from vehicle traffic, has been designed in accordance with LTN 1/20 (**CD8/4**) and has been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.
- The Fir Tree Grove pedestrian/cycle route provides a direct route to the town centre and has been designed having regard to guidance set out in LTN 1/20 (**CD8/4**). It includes an attractive route through the site connecting to new and enhanced footways on Rocks Road, where cyclists will join the carriageway.
- The Transport Statement of Common Ground (**CD1/9**) identifies that vehicle speeds on Rocks Road and Snatts Road are travelling well below the posted speed limit and that vehicle flows are low, with vehicle speeds on Church Street agreed as travelling broadly in line with the 20 mph posted speed limit. Enhancements to pedestrian facilities are proposed along the route to the town centre, which are all deliverable within the public highway and considered to be appropriate for the projected increase in demand. The works have also been the subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.
- The Snatts Road route mainly relies on existing links, which are well used and considered fit for purpose for the vast majority of users. The proposed enhancements to the route will be of benefit to existing users and not just future residents of the development, and have been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.

- In respect of bus provision, it has been agreed that a financial contribution of £1,100 per dwelling will be paid to ESCC through a Section 106 Agreement to facilitate the diversion of bus service 31 along the A22 and into the site. Subject to such a contribution and the provision of public transport infrastructure, such as a bus turnaround and real-time passenger information within the site, ESCC considers public transport accessibility to be acceptable as set out in the Transport Statement of Common Ground (**CD1/9**).
- A residential Framework Travel Plan (**CD2/29**) has been prepared and forms part of the planning application. It is anticipated that a Full Travel Plan will be secured by suitably worded planning condition and be subject to regular monitoring and review. A Travel Plan Coordinator will be appointed to implement the measures set out in the Plan and complete the monitoring programme in liaison with ESCC to achieve the objectives and final targets set out in the approved Full Travel Plan.
- Vehicular access to the proposed development will be via a new roundabout junction on the A22 located north of Lake Wood, approximately 1 kilometre to the north of Copwood roundabout and 1.2 kilometres south-west of Black Down roundabout. The access arrangement has been designed in accordance with relevant standards outlined in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.
- The proposals include the creation of a new vehicular access to Snatts Road to serve a small parking area associated with the strategic SANG, which includes suitable visibility splays.
- An emergency access with left in/left out arrangement is proposed off an existing layby on the A22, positioned circa 700 metres to the south-west Black Down roundabout and 500 metres north-east of the proposed site access. Use of the access will be controlled by a removable barrier/bollard, appropriately secured to prevent use by unauthorised vehicles.
- The residential element of the development is in outline form. Therefore, final car and cycle parking provision, details of the internal layout, arrangements for servicing and deliveries and provision of a car club will be agreed as part of the reserved matters application(s).
- The previous appeal scheme related to a far greater quantum of residential development (approximately 750 dwellings) and also included provision of a new neighbourhood centre with employment uses, community uses, small retail facilities and a primary school. In this respect, the previous appeal proposals included a number of different uses with the potential to attract new trips to the site, as well as more limited off-site works to support active travel, some of which were not considered to be deliverable (namely, the Snatts Road Link). Importantly, the current scheme includes additional land within the application site to deliver the Fir Tree Grove route to Rocks Road and the works proposed along Rocks Road and Church Street towards the town centre are fully deliverable within the public highway.
- In respect of traffic impact on Uckfield town centre, ESCC acknowledges that any impact could be mitigated through a financial contribution towards an 'enhanced control system' at those junctions as confirmed in the Transport Statement of Common Ground (**CD1/9**).

3.2 With the above in mind, it is my professional opinion that the proposals are fully compliant with the transport related principles of the NPPF, particularly section 9, which relates to sustainable travel and impacts on the road network. Furthermore, I do not consider the transport related aspects of the proposals to be in conflict with either the saved policies of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 or the strategic planning objectives or policies of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013. I therefore conclude that there are no highways or transport related grounds that would justify refusal of planning permission.