

From : [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Date: 4/18/2023 1:15:44 PM

Subject: Solar and battery farm, Land west of Ashwell Rd - NHDC ref 22/00741/FP

Hello [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Sorry again for the delay - I was off sick for a time and my colleague in Network Management was also on leave for a while. We've now reviewed, as well as spoken to our Safety team. I appreciate you and your team have undertaken a lot of work on this, and I can advise as follows:

- The overriding point is that Ashwell Road / Bygrave Road is not designed for routine articulated lorry movements. The fact that its access with North Road needs widening to accommodate them testifies to this. However, with the various mitigations and measures you propose, along with the additional points we raise below, we are willing to accept an absolute maximum of 2 articulated lorry visits per day (i.e. a total of 4 two-way movements per day). I believe this level is what was presented early on, and a "slightly higher demand of 3-4" is a newer proposal which in our view tips this over the edge to a more routine daily use – along a stretch of highway which is not designed for this, and where many of its users will not be expecting vehicles of this size to approach.

- All HGVs, including articulated lorries, must only use this route between 9:30am and 2:30pm, to avoid peak hours and school opening and closing times.

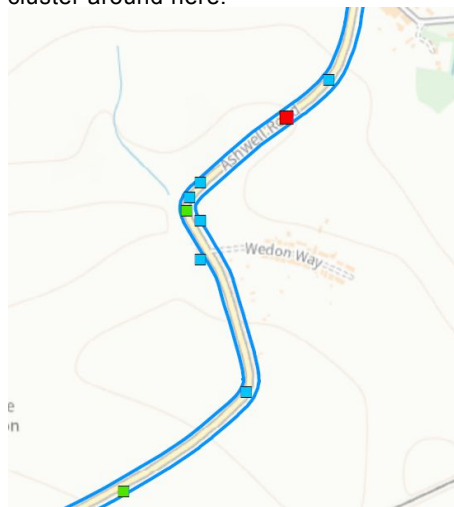
- In terms of the widening of the North Road / Bygrave Road junction, our Safety team has not identified significant initial concerns, but do observe the following:

i) Care will be needed in moving the refuge island in the bellmouth closer to the main carriageway, as the visibility to the right may be partly obstructed if the keep left bollard is poorly located. As an aside, is there is an opportunity to make use of solar powered bollards at this location?

ii) Visibility to and from the junction may be degraded by new vegetation growth, in particular, overhanging vegetation to the south along North Road / the southern visibility splay. In addition, overhanging vegetation on the downward slope of Bygrave Road when approaching North Road is notable. This new growth should be cut back more frequently, with larger vehicles being present and turning at the junction, since they take longer to complete such manoeuvres.

- Please note that all changes to the public highway, including to the North Road / Bygrave Road junction, will need to go through the s278 process and stage 2 road safety audit – in good time, and work completed to our satisfaction before commencement of the development. In terms of reinstating the junction after construction, we note that the bellmouth alterations would remove the grass verge separating the carriageway from the narrow footway at the junction. There may instead be an opportunity to widen the footway permanently by providing a simple low retaining structure (such as kerb flags on edge), to retain the base of the bank behind the footway. Otherwise, footway users may feel more vulnerable with a large vehicle manoeuvring much closer to them. I'm not quite sure how this would be secured, but would you be agreeable to the changes you make to this junction being monitored during the construction period, and a decision made nearer the time as to whether the junction should revert to the previous design with x weeks (to be confirmed), remain as is, or be tweaked slightly in line with the above to keep a permanent improvement?

- We have thoroughly investigated accident history along the full stretch of Bygrave Road, going back to when our records started. There have been numerous accidents along the route over the years, however it's clear that most of these are driver error, involve alcohol/drugs, or in the case of pedestrians and cyclists, these have been very infrequent with no obvious pattern. What does stand out however are accidents at or on approach to bends where speed may have been issues, and there's a clear cluster around here:



Whilst accidents arising from speeding is still essentially driver error, the historic accident data implies that there is something more of a pattern and trend here, and it would seem reasonable to expect you to look into this specific section of the route in more detail, and propose measures. There are already some permanent warning signs around here, such as these:



Clearly we don't too want much in the way of sign clutter, but there might be additional signage such as 'pedestrians in road' that could help – please consider "The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016" as a starting point, but there may be other options beyond signage too.

- In terms of the site access itself, I know we may have covered this previously, but the current location by the right of way and on a tight bend in the road is far from ideal, even with TM. The site boundary extends for a long way southwards along Ashwell Road, and it would seem eminently more sensible for the site access to be moved away from the northern boundary / tight bend, further south, along a straight section. Can you look into this further please.

- We're still concerned about the lack of holding bays which may be needed. If two HGVs meet along this route it is more problematic (your route analysis has considered only HGV and car passing by one another). Obviously any HGV on site can be held back if another is approaching, but those travelling to the site don't seem to have any hold-back options at the moment. Can you identify or create new holding areas which enable HGV drivers of the largest HGVs to stop, call ahead and check all is clear, before proceeding? I dealt with another site a few years ago where all HGV driver made use of a GPS tracking system, monitored centrally from the site, and enabled a controller to inform drivers on the road whether to hold back or proceed.

- Finally, we would be seeking a clause within the CTMP that ensures regular monitoring of the full route, from the junction with North Road up to the site access. We of course need to be reasonable in this, as I doubt we could expect construction work to cease if all aspects of the CTMP are being adhered to, but we're concerned about grass verges being churned up in places with mud carried out onto the highway, or other damage. Can you commit to monitoring this, including road cleaning along the route if necessary, and even some minor road widening / passing places identified if there are any obvious points of conflict or issues?

I'm sure you'll agree that this is a challenging section of road for such a large construction project, but I believe we've taken a reasonable and pragmatic approach in all the above. Yes, it involves a bit more work and consideration, but essentially we now accept the very broad principle of this route subject to the above restrictions and measures.

I hope that helps.

Regards



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