

1st response received 10.07.2017

Thank you for your letter dated 29 June 2017 regarding the above application requesting a response by 27 July 2017.

Highways England 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 Highways England works 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.

Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), in this case the M20 around Maidstone, especially in the vicinity of Junction 5.

Having assessed the submitted Transport Assessment, our initial comments are as follows:

1. The proposed link road will require changes to the access to the Police Site that Highways England Traffic Officers use, which could result in an increase in delay accessing / existing the site. We will liaise with TO Colleagues to establish their views.
2. In addition to committed developments, TEMPRO growth factors ("adjusted for the committed development") have been applied to 2016 traffic flows for the 2030 scenarios. We have been unable to identify these rates within the Transport Assessment. **We require this information to be provided to enable us to assess their appropriateness.**
3. As per DfT guidance, traffic surveys should be carried out during a 'neutral', or representative, month avoiding main and local holiday periods, local school holidays and half terms, and other abnormal traffic periods. National experience is that the following Monday to Thursdays can be neutral:
 - late March and April – excluding the weeks before and after Easter;
 - May - excluding the Thursday before and all of the week of each Bank Holiday;
 - June;
 - September – excluding school holidays or return to school weeks;
 - all of October; and
 - all of November – provided adequate lighting is available.

Base traffic surveys were undertaken in July 2016, which is not a neutral month. Typically the last few weeks of School Term Time are not 'typical', with students having completed exams (e.g. GCSEs and A Levels) not being required to attend. This assertion is supported within the Transport Assessment, which makes reference to the survey data requiring factoring up to ensure consistency with the AMEY 'A20 Corridor – Ashton Way to Coldharbour Roundabout Study' (2016).

We therefore require evidence that the day of the surveys represented an average (typical / neutral) day at the M20 Junction 5. This could potentially be in the form of a review of Webtris data, comparing Peak Hour traffic volumes in July 2016 (and particularly on the day of the junction counts) to the equivalent in neutral 2016 months.

4. We have also noted that the Traffic Surveys were dated Tuesday 06 July 2016; 06 July 2016 was a Wednesday. **We therefore also require clarification on the date of the surveys (Tuesday 05 or Wednesday 06 or some other day/date entirely).**
5. The modelling results, subject to clarification on the above, currently indicate that the existing Coldharbour Lane Roundabout cannot accommodate the proposed development. With the

existing layout, queues on Coldharbour Lane are predicted to block back onto the M20 Junction 5 in the AM Peak.

Whilst it is noted that the KCC scheme tested will accommodate the proposed development, it cannot be taken as certain that the KCC scheme will proceed in this form (it is our understanding that the scheme is not yet fully designed, agreed or funded), or be guaranteed that it will be implemented prior to this application, if permitted, being constructed. **As such, we require confirmation that this application would provide the mitigation if it were to proceed in advance/ in the absence of the KCC scheme.**

This is not only important from the viewpoint of maintaining the safety, reliability and operational efficiency of the SRN for road users, but also in terms of our Traffic Officers being able to access the M20 24/7/365 from their Coldharbour base (shared with Kent Police) to the south of M20J5, but also our operations, stewardship and maintenance crews being able to gain 24/7/365 access to the M20 from their depot located in Coldharbour Lane to the north of M20J5.

6. The modelling results, subject to clarification on the above, currently indicate that the existing M20 Junction 5 cannot accommodate the proposed development. With the existing layout, queues are predicted to significantly increase on the M20 East off-slip.

While it is noted that the signalisation scheme tested will accommodate the proposed development, it cannot be taken as certain that the scheme will be implemented prior to this application, if permitted, being constructed. **As such, we require confirmation of what mitigation this application would provide if it were to proceed in advance/ in the absence of the M20 Junction 5 scheme.**

I look forward to receiving additional information in due course.

In the meantime, we would ask that the authority does not determine the application (other than a refusal) ahead of us receiving and responding to the required information. In the event that the authority wishes to permit the application before this point, we would ask the authority to inform us so that we can provide a substantive response based the position as known at that time.

2nd response received 24.11.2017

We received from Mr Weeks an e-mail dated 07 November 2017 which included a Technical Note 'In Response to Highways and Transportation Comments Raised by Kent County Council and Highways England' (undated).

You will recall that Highways England 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 Highways England works 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.

Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), in this case the M20 around Maidstone, especially in the vicinity of Junction 5.

We assessed the originally submitted Transport Assessment, identifying a number of key issues.

Having now assessed the Technical Note, we have updated the original comments below in red:

1. The proposed link road will require changes to the access to the Police Site that Highways England Traffic Officers use, which could result in an increase in delay accessing / existing the site. We will liaise with TO Colleagues to establish their views.

The response from Traffic Officer colleagues is that any delay egressing Coldharbour outstation from the Kent Police site is a major concern. We suspect Kent Police may hold a

similar view and should be directly consulted. Although, unlike the Police, Traffic Officers are not a Cat 1 responder urgency is required when responding to an incident especially if it is graded as immediate by the RCC. While typically our units are parked up at strategic locations on the network and would deploy from there; there may be occasions when a unit will be deployed direct from the outstation especially at changeover times. Coldharbour is also a major operations hub whenever Operation Stack is implemented.

Therefore we require a sensitivity test to assess any additional time delays for vehicle deployment exiting onto/via the new link road. Any delay could be the difference between reaching incidents in time or not.

In addition to committed developments, TEMPRO growth factors ("adjusted for the committed development") have been applied to 2016 traffic flows for the 2030 scenarios. We have been unable to identify these rates within the Transport Assessment. **We require this information to be provided to enable us to assess their appropriateness.**

The Technical Note does not specify TEMPRO assumptions, therefore we have been unable to replicate the analysis. We require this information to be provided to enable us to assess their appropriateness. With regard to committed developments, the TA stated that *"It should be noted that an updated list was recently received which is currently being analysed. It is not anticipated the changes will make a material difference to the analysis but if any changes are relevant an Addendum to the Transport Assessment will be issued."* Details of the changes are required as well as a clarification of impacts.

Base traffic surveys were undertaken in July 2016, which is not a neutral month. **We therefore require evidence that the day of the surveys represented an average (typical / neutral) day at the M20 Junction 5.** This could potentially be in the form of a review of Webtris data, comparing Peak Hour traffic volumes in July 2016 (and particularly on the day of the junction counts) to the equivalent in neutral 2016 months.

A initial high level review of Webtris appears to show that the July surveys do not accord with Webtris data from the equivalent day(s). Assessment of a neutral day (Feb 3rd to align with the A20 study) suggest that the factors used to adjust the July survey data are not representative of typical traffic on the slip roads. This could be due to differing proportion of turning movements between the two periods within which a 'flat factor' applied uniformly cannot account for. We require evidence that factored turning counts are representative of a neutral day at this junction as a high level review of Webtris data suggests that it isn't.

For clarity it would also be useful if peak periods are specified.

We have also noted that the Traffic Surveys were dated Tuesday 06 July 2016; 06 July 2016 was a Wednesday. **We therefore also require clarification on the date of the surveys (Tuesday 05 or Wednesday 06 or some other day/date entirely).**

See response to 3. above, for transparency this survey date needs to be clarified.

The modelling results, subject to clarification on the above, currently indicate that the existing Coldharbour Lane Roundabout cannot accommodate the proposed development. With the existing layout, queues on Coldharbour Lane are predicted to block back onto the M20 Junction 5 in the AM Peak.

Whilst it is noted that the KCC scheme tested will accommodate the proposed development, it cannot be taken as certain that the KCC scheme will proceed in this form (it is our understanding that the scheme is not yet fully designed, agreed or funded), or be guaranteed that it will be implemented prior to this application, if permitted, being constructed. **As such, we require confirmation that this application would provide the mitigation if it were to proceed in advance/ in the absence of the KCC scheme.**

Based on the evidence provided, no mitigation scheme has been identified that has been guaranteed to be constructed prior to the development being occupied. We require confirmation that that this application would provide either: a scheme that will mitigate the development impacts; a commitment to fund the identified scheme within the timescales; or agreement to a condition that limits the occupancy of the development until a satisfactory scheme has been implemented.

To reiterate the response we provided to the TA, this is not only important from the viewpoint of maintaining the safety, reliability and operational efficiency of the SRN for road users, but also in terms of our Traffic Officers being able to access the M20 24/7/365 from their Coldharbour base (shared with Kent Police) to the south of M20J5, but also our operations, stewardship and maintenance crews being able to gain 24/7/365 access to the M20 from their depot located in Coldharbour Lane to the north of M20J5.

The modelling results, subject to clarification on the above, currently indicate that the existing M20 Junction 5 cannot accommodate the proposed development. With the existing layout, queues are predicted to significantly increase on the M20 East off-slip.

While it is noted that the signalisation scheme tested will accommodate the proposed development, it cannot be taken as certain that the scheme will be implemented prior to this application, if permitted, being constructed. **As such, we require confirmation of what mitigation this application would provide if it were to proceed in advance/ in the absence of the M20 Junction 5 scheme.**

As above, we require confirmation of what mitigation this application would provide if it were to proceed in advance/ in the absence of the M20 Junction 5 scheme.

I look forward to receiving additional information in due course.

You will note that we have copied this email to the authority (and KCC Highways) and recommend that they do not determine the application (other than a refusal) ahead of us receiving and responding to the required information. In the event that the authority wishes to permit the application before this point, we would ask the authority to inform us so that we can provide a substantive response based the position as known at that time.

3rd response received 27.03.19

My records show that on the 24th November 2017, Highways England advised the council (as planning authority) that the supporting transport evidence to the above mentioned planning application was insufficient to enable us to provide a final substantive response. Accordingly, Highways England requested that the council refrain from determining this application until the additional information requested was available for consideration and response. I am now contacting you for an update

on this matter as it has been a while since we have received any communication on this application.

Highways England is concerned with this application in that it has the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the M20 Junction 5.

4th (and final) response received 07.08.2019

As you will be aware we have been working with the applicant for the above application to agree evidence regarding the impact the proposals would have on the Strategic Road Network. We are now in a position to be able to provide our final response of 'No Objection'.

You will also recall that Highways England 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 Highways England works 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.

Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case, particularly the M20J5 in the vicinity of Aylesford; and in this particular case, the impact on the ability of the Highways England Traffic Officer Depot at Coldharbour Lane to carry out their roles and responsibilities on the SRN.

We have assessed the submitted documentation and when combined with our own information, we have concluded that the proposed development, if permitted, will be unlikely to materially affect the safety, reliability and / or operation of the SRN (the tests set out in DfT Circular 02/13, particularly paragraphs 9 & 10, and MHCLG NPPF, particularly para 109).

However, we would request that an informative be attached to any permission requiring Kent County Highways to consult with Highways England regarding the final proposed designs of any road layout affecting the access/egress to and operation of the Coldharbour Traffic Officers Depot.

We wanted to be able to provide our final position as soon as possible. Therefore at this time please find attached our HEPR response form of 'No Objection'. We will synthesize the many correspondence exchanges and provide a paper providing more details about how we reached this position in due course.