

Briefing Note for the Planning Committee

My name is Alan Bailes, I am the Ward Councillor for Alvechurch South. I am also a Chartered Transport Planner and Traffic Engineer.

I would like to take this opportunity to address you, and whilst not technically a Redditch Ward Councillor, the traffic from the proposed residential development can only enter and leave via roads in my ward and the infamous A441/Dagnell End Road traffic lights. The proposed residential development will generate an additional quarter of a million extra vehicles a year through my ward. This is in addition to the three quarters of a million vehicles a year generated from the recently approved Brockhill development. A grand total of an additional million vehicles a year.

Whilst the impact of traffic resulting from the residential development is disturbing, **my real concern is the fact that you have inaccurate data before you as part of the applicants supporting evidence, which I contend should be excluded from any assessment of the impact of traffic from the proposed residential development on the surrounding highway.**

The original Hither Green Lane development Transport Assessment, dated October 2021, was based upon traffic flows obtained from the Transport Assessment associated with the Brockhill East site (PJA TA 'Land at Brockhill East' Phase 3 June 2019) and approved by Worcestershire County Council. The results of the 2021 transport assessment revealed that the A441/Dagnell End Road traffic signal junction at the assessment year 2030, with the development traffic included, eroded the capacity of the junction by some 5%. This increase in traffic reduced the practical reserve capacity (PRC) of the junction, resulting from the proposed residential development, is substantial and consequently would lead to significant additional queues and delays to those already experienced at this busy junction. **Thus, having a "severe" impact on the junction and contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) section 115.**

Due to "severe" impact of traffic from the development, in April 2023, the applicant submitted a Transport Assessment Addendum (TAA) which reran the A441/Dagnell End Road junction model using a different set of traffic survey data. The modelling of the A441/Dagnell End Road junction has now been based on traffic surveys undertaken on Tuesday 15th November 2022. Within the TAA at section 2.3.2 it states:

"The updated traffic surveys (November 2022) provide a more accurate indication of current travel plans and take account of sustained changes in the type and scale of travel patterns which have occurred in the UK since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic."

More disturbing is the fact that WCC consented to the use of the updated survey data for the purpose of the updated junction model.

The applicant only refers to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic – what is important, is that both the applicant and WCC have failed to recognise the fact that the A441 Birmingham Road between Cobbs Barn Farm roundabout and the Sainsbury's Roundabout had major roadworks along its length for 7 months which only finished at the beginning of November 2022. After the completion of the roadworks there were water leaks and snagging problems throughout November 2022, all requiring traffic signals in operation along the A441. As part of the major roadworks Severn Trent Water, who were laying a new major water main, implemented Matrix signs at both the Cobbs Barn Farm and Sainsbury's roundabouts stating that *"due to major roadworks on the A441 Birmingham Road drivers are asked to seek alternative routes"*. It was noticeable to residents that throughout the 7 months of continual major roadworks traffic queues and delays the traffic flows were significantly reduced

On examination of the two sets of traffic count data it was found that the total traffic through the A441/Dagnell End Road junction in **November 2022 was 30% lower,** when compared to the pre-pandemic and pre-roadworks traffic flows. It is obvious that with such a massive reduction in traffic flow, there is no way that traffic levels can be seen to have reverted back to what can be considered normal. In addition, traffic resulting from the extensive roadworks along Birmingham Road had not returned to normal.

Total Inflow to the Traffic Signal Junction (Vehs)		
2019 (original TA)	November 2022	Difference
2,426	1,671	-755 (-31%)

Not surprisingly therefore that following the use of the November 2022 traffic counts the TAA found that the A441/Dagnell End Road traffic signal junction will operate within acceptable capacity parameters following the introduction of the development proposals, and that no further mitigation is therefore deemed necessary.

With such a large discrepancy in traffic flows and the doubt that the November 2022 traffic counts were undertaken during normal traffic flow conditions, constant requests of both the Case Officer and the Highway Authority have been made to substantiate their reasoning for accepting the traffic counts. **To date no response has been received.**

Due to the total lack of response and in order to validate the view that the roadworks suppressed traffic flows at the A441/Dagnell End Road junction a traffic count at the junction was undertaken on the 12th March 2024 for the morning peak hour 0800-0900. The results of the traffic count are given at **Annex 1**. The results of the survey indicted that traffic flows had returned to normality following the extensive roadworks undertaken along the A441 Birmingham Road and showed a total inflow to the junction of 2,253 vehicles for the AM peak hour - **thus validating the erroneous nature of the November 2022 traffic count upon which the traffic impact of the development has been assessed.** The table below examines the differences between the traffic counts during the AM peak hour.

Time Period	Total Inflow to the Traffic Signal Junction (Vehs)		
	2019 (original TA)	November 2022 (TAA)	March 2024
AM Peak Hour	2,426	1,671	2,253

It is clearly obvious that traffic flows had not returned to anything near normal by the time the traffic surveys were undertaken on 15th November 2022 and that traffic had heeded the traffic matrix signs and avoided the area.

It is incredulous that the highway authority did not seek to check the duration, length and type of roadworks in the area, together with its impact on traffic, before consenting to updated traffic surveys. It appears highly likely that neither the applicant nor the Development Control Section of WCC were aware of the impact the major roadworks was having on travel patterns along the A441 Birmingham Road as demonstrated above.

To base the Transport Assessment upon unreliable and erroneous traffic is totally wrong and you are being asked to decide this planning application on completely misleading information. Therefore, contrary to section 2.3.2 of the TAA, the November 2022 traffic surveys do not provide a more accurate indication of current travel plans and take account of sustained changes.

The November 2022 traffic flow data should be inadmissible in any assessment of the impact of traffic from the proposed residential development on the surrounding highway network. The comments made in my 9th February 2022 submission, based on the original TA, remain valid and justifiable. The cumulative impacts on the road network resulting from the Hither Green Lane proposed development can only be seen as “severe”. As a result, the proposed residential development is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 111 and the Borough of Redditch Local Plan Policy 20.

Finally, and in what appears to be a desperate attempt to try and make the proposed residential development site sustainable, the TAA has tried to devise a set of proposals aimed at promoting opportunities for sustainable travel to and from the site by way of an improved bus service. Whilst it sounds like the site will be well served by bus in the future, it is a limited peak period service. In mode shift terms, an hourly peak period bus service and only serving the wider town is vague and not considered adequate to persuade commuters, shoppers or leisure travellers transferring from private car to the bus.

There is no correspondence with the local operator, Diamond Bus, confirming that they will operate a bus service, so it can only be viewed as aspirational. Furthermore, there are no indications how much the bus service will cost and how long the subsidy will last.

Given that this is a “full” application there is no certainty over the fact that the diverted bus service can be delivered to ensure that the site is sustainable and for how long. In order to be successful, it is essential that the transport bus subsidies are sustainable and robust, this has not been demonstrated here.

Current experience appears to indicate that constant level of bus demand from circa 220 dwellings will be limited and would appear to cast doubt on the S106 funding being a success. In various reports there appears to be little correlation between the size of the site and the likelihood of Section 106 funding being a success. However, sites which no longer have S106 funded have seen the service provision reduced or not reinstated due to lack of patronage and appear to have been over-provided for in the first place.

The question the decision maker must ask is - what exactly is the bus service that may be delivered by the S106 bus service contribution, over what time period, and given the scale of the development, what guarantees are there that the service will be successful and not withdrawn?

Annex 1 – Tuesday 12th March AM Peak Hour Traffic Count

Tuesday 12 th March 2024

Junction: A441 / Dagnell End Road Junction

Approach: A441 North Arm

	Left to Dagnell End Road				Ahead to Redditch			
TIME	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL
08:00 - 08:15	46	4	0	50	204	2	0	206
08:15 - 08:30	49	2	0	51	207	6	0	213
08:30 - 08:45	39	1	1	41	172	11	1	184
08:45 - 09:00	50	1	0	51	197	5	0	202
Hourly Total	184	8	1	193	780	24	1	805

Approach: Dagnell End Road

	Left to Redditch				Right to Birmingham			
TIME	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL
08:00 - 08:15	44	6	0	50	43	7	0	50
08:15 - 08:30	40	6	0	46	39	7	0	46
08:30 - 08:45	37	2	0	39	37	3	0	40
08:45 - 09:00	36	4	0	40	39	2	0	41
Hourly Total	157	18	0	175	158	19	0	177

Approach: A441 South Arm

	Right to Dagnell End Road				Ahead to Birmingham			
TIME	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL	LIGHT	HEAVY	BUS	TOTAL
08:00 - 08:15	61	0	0	61	199	8	1	208
08:15 - 08:30	55	1	0	56	158	5	0	163
08:30 - 08:45	36	2	0	38	150	11	0	161
08:45 - 09:00	45	2	0	47	161	7	1	169
Hourly Total	197	5	0	202	668	31	2	701